

# ספר יחזקאל

# The Book of YECHZEKEL

Translation and Commentary

by  
Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer



Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer's original translation and commentary on the Book of Yechezkel, now rendered into English, draws on the Midrash, classic commentaries, and S.R. Hirsch to elucidate this fundamental yet difficult to comprehend volume of T'nach. The Prophet's visions of the Churban and the Redemption, his descriptions of the Galuth and the future Sanctuary — concepts which are basic to Torah thought, practice and belief — are analyzed and explained here in a manner which imbues the contemporary reader with the relevance of the Prophet's message.



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RAV DR. JOSEPH BREUER

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Gertrude Hirschler**

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This volume is dedicated, with heartfelt gratitude,  
to our parents,

Mr. and Mrs. Philipp Feldheim

ר' שרגא יהודה בן ר' צבי מרדכי זיל פולדהיימן  
כ"ט באדר תשענ

וזוגתו מרת גיטל בת ר' יצחק קאליש זיל  
כ"א בניסן תנש"א

ת.ג.צ.ב.ה

By their words and by their example, they taught us  
— and continue to teach us — the meaning of  
“Torah im Derech Eretz.”

*Yaakov and Yitzchok Feldheim*

The Feldheim family's association with the works of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch began with the warm friendship between Mr. Philipp Feldheim פַּלִּיבָהָי and Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer בְּרֵאָעֶר. For nearly half a century, in close cooperation with the Samson Raphael Hirsch Society — headed by the Breuer family — Feldheim Publishers has produced and/or distributed Hebrew and English editions of Hirsch's immortal works, including *Fundamentals of Judaism*, *Timeless Torah*, *The Nineteen Letters of ben Uziel*, *The Psalms*, *Pirkey Avos*, *The Hirsch Siddur*, *From the Wisdom of Mishle*, *The Hirsch Chumash*, *The Hirsch Hagaddah*, and *The Collected Writings of Samson Raphael Hirsch*, as well as commentaries on the Books of Yirmeyahu and Yechezkel by Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer, who has continued Hirsch's tradition of Tanach exegesis. Together, the Feldheim and Breuer families, along with those outstanding scholars who pioneered in the translation and compilation of Hirsch's ideas, have perpetuated the dissemination of Torah for the contemporary English reader and glorified Hashem's Holy Name.

## Editors' Preface

Rav Dr. Joseph Breuer ר' יוזף ברוער has left an indelible impact on our generation. His towering achievements—championing the teachings and שולחן התורה עסך דרכֶּן ideology of his grandfather, Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, as an integral part of תורה; re-establishing the renowned Frankfurt *Kehilla* and its educational institutions after the destruction of European Jewry—remain sources of inspiration to individuals and communities throughout the world.

Like Rav Hirsch, Rav Breuer was undaunted by the adversity of the challenges of the *galuth*. Through his teachings and personality he enabled a whole generation to survive, and flourish, amidst the unspeakable tragedies of this century. His standing as a נזר בחרה גורל lent full force to his unwavering conviction that the opportunities and circumstances presented by contemporary society and technological advancement could be met by the path offered by Rav Hirsch. More than a decade after his passing, his exemplary leadership during a crisis-laden era, his sterling integrity and honesty, and the warmth of his interpersonal relationships remain impressed on our minds.

The *נו"י* were a true font of inspiration for Rav Breuer. They were veritably “alive” for him and he approached them as if their message were addressed to our own time. He published his *Commentary to Yechezkel* in 1921 while he was at the side of his father, Rav Dr. Salomon Breuer ר' שאול, the successor and son-in-law of Rav Hirsch, in leading the ישיבת גדריה in Frankfurt. The author was steeped in the teachings of Rav Hirsch and every verse was analyzed from this frame of reference. His *Commentary to Yirmiyahu* (published in 1914; English translation in 1988) and *Commentary to Yechezkel* are thus comprehensive evaluations from the Hirschian point of view, drawing on the classical commentators while offering his own interpretation. Although the study of Yechezkel often presents great difficulties, the depth and clarity of Rav Breuer’s *Commentary* have made it a fundamental source in the treatment of this subject matter.

In the Foreword to his *Commentary*, Rav Breuer outlines the unique position of Yechezkel as Prophet of the *galuth*. Rav Breuer’s own lifework in the *galuth*—a life (1882–1980) spanning the flourishing of Torah in pre-War Europe, the destruction of the Holocaust, and the revival of Torah in the Diaspora as well as in Eretz Yisroel—is strikingly fitting for a commentator on the Prophet Yechezkel.

This volume is presented to the public with a deep sense of reverence to the sacred memory of its author. May it serve to teach future generations the timeless message of the Prophet and help effect the ultimate return of our people to our Land in peace and tranquility.

Marc Breuer  
Jacob Breuer  
Meta Bechhofer  
Elliott Bondi

**In memory of my unforgettable sister**

**HANNAH MEYER-BREUER ה"ע**

**A woman who thirsted for knowledge and whose  
heart and mind were strengthened and inspired by  
the words of the Prophets and the Psalmist**

**The Author**

## Foreword

Our Prophets must be studied בקדושה, in a mental frame of spirituality. They are our Divine guides chosen by God to help us unravel the enigma of life. They imbue us with the determination and inner strength to solve our God-willed tasks in life. As the foremost interpreters of God's Torah, the Prophets transmit to us this most precious of all our treasures. The Prophets are our great teachers who help us to understand the Torah and to live up to the demands of its eternal precepts. Their writings do not contain a single word, a single thought, which does not flow from the unadulterated totality of Torah. They expose the lie and hypocrisy employed by ignorance and indifference as a means of falsifying and distorting the Divine Word. As teachers and mentors provided to us by the grace of Divine providence, the Prophets guide us through the thicket of contemporary problems and, with the Torah in their hands, help us meet and surmount the challenges of our daily existence. Their message resounds through the millennia as it addresses us with timeless immediacy.

Yechezkel is the Prophet of the *galuth*. His words address the problems of the *golah*, its trials and tribulations. He is our guide through the *galuth* but also our guide out of the *galuth*. With matchless fervor Yechezkel reviews the history of our people: its Sinai summons as the nation of God, the conditions for its prosperity and the causes of its downfall. The themes of his book cover the spectrum of the Jewish world view: who is entitled to consider himself part of the Jewish nation (Chapters 16 and 20); the supreme singularity of Torah as the indivisible Law of God ruling over Israel's national and individual existence (Chs. 18, 20 and 22); Israel's never-ending commitment to the precepts of the Divine Law; Israel's gradual maturing as the nation of God, the goal of the Divine course of history (Chs. 20 and 36); the tasks of the true leader (Chs. 3, 14, 33 and 34); Jewish self-respect and Jewish shamefacedness (Chs. 16 and 23); the leader who seduces and poisons people's minds (Chs. 12 and 13); the desecrated Sanctuary of the past (Chs. 8, 20 [V.29], 24, 43 [V.8] and 44); the essence and significance of Israel's nationhood and the conditions for its success (Ch. 15); the people of God and Jewish kingship; the land of God and His nation (Chs. 34, 36, 37 and 45-48); *Shechina* nearness and *Shechina* removal (Chs. 1 and 10); the true Sanctuary of the future (Chs. 20 [V.40 ff.], 34, 36, 37, and 43-48); political immorality; Israel's most dangerous enemy, assimilation and power worship; an un-Jewish\* Eretz Yisrael, the grave of the Jewish people (Chs. 16 and 23); the *galuth* as "desert wandering" (Ch. 20 [V.35]); spiritual

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\* The author uses the term "un-Jewish" (*unjüdisch*) to mean not in the spirit of Torah Judaism, as distinct from non-Jewish. (Ed.)

purification through *galuth* (Chs.22 and 24); the un-Jewish state, the un-Jewish land (Ch.11); the true guidelines for a Jewish governing policy, the real sources of Jewish strength (Chs.17, 19, 21, 23 and 29[V.16]); Divine justice, Divine mercifulness (Chs.9,14,15,18,22,23 and 36); *Shechina* proximity in the *galuth* (Chs.11 and 16); Israel's claim to Eretz Yisrael (Chs.33[V.24 ff.]); the way to God's nearness (Chs.14 and 20) Israel's return to its land as the nation of God (Chs. 20, 28[V.25ff.] and 38); courage in *galuth*, trust in the truth of God's promises for the future (Chs.33-37); the people in *galuth* away from its own land is the Jewish people of the future (Chs.11[V.15 ff.] and 36); Israel and mankind; the significance of Jerusalem and its Sanctuary for the world (Chs.5,26,28,35 and 36); the salvation of mankind for its true destiny (Chs. 25-32); the transience of nations and the goal of historical developments (Chs. 16,17,35,36,38 and 39); God of history (Ch. 21); fulfillment of mankind's aspirations (Chs.38 and 39).

The Book of Yechezkel must be read in conjunction with the Book of Jeremiah. These great messengers of God were faced with the task of helping the people overcome a tragic period of national disintegration and decay. Living in the land, citizen of the Jewish state, Jeremiah's powerful voice is heard in the streets of Jerusalem and in the chambers of the Sanctuary. His strenuous efforts to extricate his people from the clutches of its seducers are in vain. In desperation he focuses on the Sanctuary and the royal fortress which had been transformed into tragic symbols of the hypocrisy and treachery prevalent in the Jewish state. His only hope for a possible cure of the national cancer lies with the *golah* in Babylonia to which King Yechonia and the leaders of the Jewish people had been exiled eleven years before the final collapse of the Jewish state. Jeremiah foresees the return to the land of Israel after a passage of seventy years.

Yechezkel, his great contemporary in the Babylonian exile, alerts his people to the dangerous influence emanating from the homeland. He describes the frightening extent of its social and political demoralization which threatens to spread over the land of the exiled. Only total spiritual isolation from these influences could save the *golah* from a similar fate. To this task Yechezkel devotes his unflagging energy as he proclaims the ultimate return of all of Israel to its God and the simultaneous gradual elevation of all of mankind to its God-willed destiny.

At the same time that Jeremiah prepares the foundation for the reconstruction of the Jewish state even as it crumbles (Jeremiah, Ch.32), Yechezkel's spiritual eye views the eternal Sanctuary of God, the eternal city of God, the eternal state of God.

That the Book of Yechezkel can be understood only in its interrelation with the Book of Jeremiah—whose life-work he perpetuated—is borne out by the absence of any reference to the *geulah* predicted after the passage of

seventy years; nor is there any mention of the ultimate fate of the Babylonian empire. Jeremiah records his prophetic pronouncement of the coming *geulah* in a special book that he sent from Jerusalem to the exiles in Babylonia (Jeremiah, Chapter 29). In this book he also outlines the tasks facing the *golah* in Babylonia, such as the obligation to further the welfare of the Babylonian state despite its ill-treatment of the Jewish population: **דְּרוּשׁוּ אֶת שָׁלוֹם הַעִיר וּנוּרֵי כִּי בְּשִׁלּוֹתָה יִהְיֶה לְכֶם שָׁלוֹם.**

While any mention by Yechezkel—living as he did in the midst of the *golah*—of the ultimate downfall of the Babylonian state would have violated the spirit of *tzirat ha-shalom*, he considered the strengthening of *geulah*-awareness among the exiles his foremost task. The success of this task would determine whether the return to the Holy Land would be a temporary sojourn in preparation for the great wandering through "the desert of nations" or the fulfillment of the Prophet's promise of the final ingathering of his people. His success would also determine if the Sanctuary which was to be erected after seventy years would be the "eternal Sanctuary" viewed by Yechezkel's prophetic eye (Chapters 40–48). This vision of the future Sanctuary posed the question: Was it possible that the **אתERRית הַמִּזְבֵּחַ**, which is inherent in the course of Jewish history, could come about as early as after the downfall of Babylonia and the ingathering of Israel on its native soil? Or would the fulfillment of the hopes made manifest by our Prophet for Israel and mankind remain for a distant future? The answer lay within the Jewish people. Alas, the reality was that the reconstructed Sanctuary contained only fragments of the Prophet's visionary ground plan (see **הַקְרִיטָה חֻסֵּךְ יְרֵשׁ לְמַסְתָּרוֹת**).

Studying the structure of Yechezkel's writings, we are struck by their extraordinary consistency, uniformity and awesome power.

Yechezkel's mission commences with his vision of the Divine glory even in the exile (Chapter 1). Far from the homeland, God's *Shechina* offers the renewal of its intimate bond with Israel. As the "son of mankind," his efforts are equally directed at bringing all men back to their real calling (Ch.2, V.11). We read of the meaning of the *golah* and the Prophet's message to the *golah* (Chs.2 and 3 [V.14]); guiding principles for the Prophet as leader of his people (Ch.3, V.17 ff.); a silent Prophet and his duties during the difficult time leading to the catastrophe in the homeland (Ch.3, V.25 ff.).

To put emphasis on his public pronouncements of warning and admonition the Prophet chooses a method of silent symbolic acts to drive home the central themes of his prophetic message: the picture of Jerusalem and its suffering people in the siege (Ch.4), the catastrophe, the dispersion (Ch.5), the sprout of crude materialism and power worship in the homeland (Ch.6), Israel's separation from its land and the loss of its state as its ultimate salvation (Ch.7). By Divine manifestations, the Prophet is granted a close view of conditions in the homeland that caused the destruction of the Jewish state and the downfall

of the Jewish land. He sees the unbelievable decadence that spells the end of the Sanctuary (Ch.8); he experiences Divine punishment (Ch.9); he perceives God's epic leave-taking from His desecrated Sanctuary (Ch.10). He accepts the fact that any attempt to control the influence of the people's unsavory leaders is in vain, and he is convinced that *galuth* is the sole chance for his people to regain its spiritual and moral health (Ch.11). He never tires to confront his people in the *golah* with the reality of its fatal delusions that must inevitably lead to a catastrophe similar in scope to the tragic events in the homeland (Ch.12). His silent acts serve as a dramatic protest against the false prophets and their calculated attempts to subvert the nation's moral fiber (Chs. 12-15).

By means of powerful parables, he shows how the false prophets distort the essence of the Jewish people's tasks and its relation to God, and he offers the truth of Jewish living (Ch.15). He recounts the story of Israel's selection as the people of God, what it needs to flourish and the causes of its astonishing decadence (Ch.16), followed by a description of the errant ways of a deluded un-Jewish governing policy (Ch.17). Then he declares with incomparable force—and in the face of all opponents—the eternal hope of rejuvenation of his people and the everlasting promise of God's living providence over the lives of all (Ch.18). Mournful words of lament flow from the lips of the Prophet as he weeps over the falling Jewish kingdom that has failed so utterly to live up to its Jewish characteristics, the true source of its strength and the only justification for its existence (Ch.19).

And then the words of the Prophet take on an even greater note of urgency, the closer the time comes for the catastrophe to set in. He relentlessly attacks those who strive to frustrate all his efforts at healing his people.

In a sweeping review of the most important phases of Jewish history, Yechezkel proclaims Israel's undying commitment to God's Torah, its Divine Law. There can never be an emancipation from this Law; Israel will never cease to be the people of God, i.e., the people of God's Law, the Torah (Ch.20). With this in mind, he envisions his native soil blood-stained by the sword of the victor, the sword of God (Ch.21). Repeatedly, he paints a picture of the increasing decadence of his people (Ch.22) and the state that has forfeited altogether its Divine character (Ch.23). And still he does not tire to reassure his people in the *golah* that there will ultimately come a redemption of people and state as promised by God.

The Prophet witnesses from afar the tragic breakup of the Jewish kingdom. Deeply moving lamentations pour forth from his lips (together with his mournful words on the death of his wife) as he exhorts his people in the *golah* to confront the reality and consequences of the catastrophic events in the homeland and the destruction of the Sanctuary (Ch.24).

During the period of upheaval and transition the "son of mankind" also

directs his prophetic message to the nations whose relationship with Israel's *galuth* had a decisive impact on its own political stability and development. He seeks to assure them that God also desires the return to Him of all of mankind (Chs.25-32). The changing circumstances profoundly affect the work of the Prophet as he receives a renewed summons as guardian of the *golah*. He must reassure his despairing brethren of God's never-ceasing mercifulness; he must demonstrate the futility of relying on their own initiative in determining their fate (Ch.33); he must re-state the conditions which alone will bring about the rebirth of the Jewish nation gathered in unity around the Divine guide and shepherd (Ch.34). This rebirth will lead to mankind's spiritual purification in preparation for its final recognition of God's eternal rule over the universe. This rebirth will also lead to the return of the people of God to the land of God once it lives up to the tasks which justify its claim to Eretz Yisrael, as eternally promised by God (Chs.35-36). The life-giving spirit of God, which will revive and resurrect the dead, will also awaken Israel to new life—as soon as it rallies sincerely around its eternal Law of life (Ch.37). These glorious chapters (Chs.38-39) conclude with a glimpse into the final stages of history when the aspirations of Jews and of all mankind will be realized and the Jewish people will understand that it is given to them to help bring this realization about.

In the final chapters of the book (Chapters 40-48) Yechezkel records the most sublime prophetic visions: the eternal Sanctuary materializes before his spiritual eye in tangible detail (Chs.40-42); he witnesses the appearance of the Divine *Shechina* and receives the eternal precepts, the fulfillment of which will secure the proximity of the Divine *Shechina*. He outlines the rules for the consecration of the altar in the future Sanctuary (Ch.43) and defines the position of the king and priesthood in relation to the Sanctuary. He depicts both the city of God and the land that is sacred to God attached closely to the Sanctuary, and then he describes the ceremonious presentation of renewed sacrifices in the Sanctuary (Chs.44-46). In the solemn finale, the Prophet describes the distribution of the land among Israel's tribes rejuvenated by the miraculous power flowing from the Sanctuary. The land will become Israel's permanent home with the fulfillment of the Divine Will (Chs.47-48).

A final word of introduction: As no other Prophet's book, the Book of Yechezkel contains numerous obscure passages that are difficult to comprehend. This should neither surprise nor discourage the reader. When the Prophet—in the last part of the book—grants us glimpses into a longed-for blissful future, it is to be expected that a full understanding must await their realization as historical events. Yet they form an integral part of this mighty work. They are the incomparable treasures of a legacy from which we derive strength and hope during our painful journey through the "desert of nations."

We shall attempt to find the meaning of the book's descriptive references

to God's *Shechina* and other manifestations of Divine Providence. We do this although we adhere on the whole to the admonition of our Sages אין דרשות אין ברכבה (תניא יא): Thus we also refrain from providing a translation for such passages. The word of wisdom of our Sages ספק אל חדרש enjoins us from delving into matters that are beyond our comprehension; אין לך ספק if it is not for us to tamper with that which must remain hidden. But we would not want to overlook these portions of the Prophet's book. We must stress that these are precious guarantors for inspirational truths and eternally genuine promises. Even without a real grasp of some of these passages, the Prophet's words are quite within our realm of understanding.

More than ever, Yechezkel's message comes to us with stunning timelessness as it defines the lofty principles and objectives that are to unite the dispersed remnants of the people of God.

May our modest contribution be accepted in this spirit. Our work is dedicated to the genuine and eternal recognition of God.

וירצחו כי אני ה'

The Author

Frankfurt a.M., Nissan 5681

**Chap. 1. 1.** It came to pass in the thirtieth year, in the fourth (month), on the fifth day of the **בָּרְכִּים בְּחִמְשָׁה לְחֶרֶשׁ וְאַנְגִּי** **בְּשִׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה** וְוֹתָרִי

**Chapter 1, Verses 1–3.** Perhaps more than in any other book of prophetic literature, these three verses, which constitute the superscription for the entire Book of Ezekiel, contain an abundance of profoundly meaningful thoughts. On closer study, we find that there are actually two superscriptions, basically distinct from one another in both form and substance. The second (Verses 2–3) (**רוּא הַשָּׁנָה הַמִּשְׁתָּחֹת**) is an interpolation; it interrupts the narrative introduced by the first one (V. 1) (**רוּהִי בְּשִׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה**) which is then resumed in Verse 4 (**אוֹרָא וּגְרָא**).

Each and every word of Verse 1 engages our attention and creates an atmosphere of suspense. "It came to pass in the thirtieth year:" We are not told from what event this year is counted. An indication of the probable date appears only in Verse 2: **לְגָלוֹת הַמִּלְחָמָה יְוִיכָן**. The date must refer to that occurrence of historic significance which became enshrined in the nation's memory so that there was apparently no need to describe it here. "I was in the midst of the exiles:" Not until Verse 3 do we learn the identity of the one who is speaking to us, and only in Verse 2 are the "exiles" identified.

"The heavens opened and I beheld visions of God." This miraculous, marvelous occurrence is mentioned at the very outset to fill us with awe and confirm its reality to us for all time, giving the present chapter its timeless significance. Only after that, in Verse 3, do we learn, almost parenthetically, the purpose of this occurrence: it was the call that went forth to Ezekiel to speak as a prophet.

Counting back 30 years from the fifth year of the exile of King Jechoniah (to which reference is made in Verse 2) and basing its computation on the chronological data given in Chapters 23–24 of the Second Book of Kings, *Seder Olam* (see also Rashi) arrives at the conclusion that the event described in these introductory verses took place in **שִׁלְשִׁים שָׁנָה מִשְׁנְמָרָה הַסְּפָר בְּכִיה**.

"Thirty years had passed since the High Priest Chilkiah had found a Torah-scroll in the Sanctuary during the renovation of the Temple and had sent it to the young prince Josiah, as a rare discovery. Josiah had been so deeply impressed by the contents of this book that he was inspired to become the messenger of salvation and rebirth" (See *Collected Writings of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch*, Volume I, p. 245).

"It came to pass in the thirtieth year:" Let us pause and pay tribute to the memory of this man, King Josiah, whose merit will endure forever because, like no other man before or after him, he attested to the wondrous, eternal power of the Word of God even during the darkest days of exile when defection from the Law of God and the cavalier attitude of an overwhelming majority threatened to destroy every hope for the survival of God's truth on earth.

בְּתוֹךְ־הַגּוֹלָה עַל־גִּנְחָרִים כָּבֵר month; I was in the midst of the

"This Torah has seen times in which five-sixths of our nation, seduced by the politics of their leaders and the sophistry of their "clerics," turned its back on the Torah . . .

"For 55 years, Menasseh [grandfather of King Josiah] had been wreaking havoc and lived with abandon in Jerusalem and in the Divine Sanctuary, a fanatic leading a reformist movement directed against the Torah and toward the cult of Baal. . . .

"Was it any wonder, then, that Menasseh's son Ammon, offered by him to the fires of idolatry at an early age, remained true to his upbringing? . . .

"Was it any wonder, then, that the book of the Torah remained completely unknown to Josiah in his youth? Did it not border on the miraculous that a copy of God's Holy Law should have been found in the Sanctuary that had been desecrated by the evil practices of Menasseh and Ammon? And that the contents of this discovery revealed to Josiah the full import of the apostasy into which his father and grandfather had dragged their people?

"Now observe the Divine strength of this godly Law! It could no longer save the *state*. The state suffered the fate that had been decreed and foretold to it by God. But the Law was able to save the *nation*. Though fully aware that no matter what he did, the state would disintegrate, Josiah assembled the whole nation—priests and prophets, young and old—around the Book of this Law. He stood high upon a platform amidst his people and solemnly resolved before God to follow Him and to fulfill His commandments, His testimonies, and His laws with all his heart and all his soul, and to uphold all the provisions of the covenant that were recorded in this Book. And all the people entered into the covenant." (*Collected Writings*, ibid.).

That is the historic event to which reference is made at the opening of our book. That is the date to which Verse 2 refers. We are counting from the time when King Jechoniah was carried into captivity. Eleven years before the destruction of the First Temple, Jechoniah had been taken prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar who carried him off to Babylonia along with the elite, far away from home, and the way for the future restoration of the Jewish people was to be paved by *חרש וטמבר*, "the artisans and the locksmiths." (On the significance of Jechoniah's deportation, see our [Rav Breuer's] commentary to Jeremiah, p. 181.)

Herein lay the task of the Prophet Ezekiel.

"I was in the midst of the exiles, . . . when the heavens opened and I beheld visions of God." Man is considered worthy of receiving Divine revelations even in the *golah*. Even in exile, far away from the soil of God's Sanctuary, mortals can attain the presence and nearness of God. This is the great truth

נִפְתָּחוּ הַשְׁמִים וְאֶרְאָה מִרְאוֹת  
the heavens opened up and I  
beheld manifestations of God.  
אלhim:

that is recorded at the opening of our Book of Exile. "Even in exile כל מקום we will go with us; wherever we gather together in His Name, He will be near to us in His glory."

הם הכרובים שהשכינה רוכבת עליהם ( מגילה כט)). The generally accepted view is that כורבים generally "appear as the bearers of the glory of God as it becomes manifest to men, guiding and participating in human affairs" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 3. 24). According to this definition, *טרכבה*, (literally, the "carriage", or "bearer") would represent the Divine guidance of human events. This view is supported by the narrative in Chapter 1 of Zechariah: *ראיתי הלילה והנה איש רכב על וות ארם* (סנהדרין זג), and so our Sages comment: *איש זה הקב"ה*. Chapter 6 of Zechariah gives us a most moving, graphic description of the manner in which God guides the developments of history (ארבע טרכבות). Also, Habakkuk exclaims (3, 8): *טרכבהיך ישועה*, as he contemplates God's saving power. Why, then, should it not be possible for men to be granted an insight into the Divine *טרכבה*? As our Sages have put it so profoundly (Yalkut on Genesis 28, 13) *"האבות הם הם הטרכבה"* "Men of purity such as our forefathers are the true bearers of the glory of God, for the glory of God seeks to dwell, above all, on earth, *"עיקר שכינה בתחתונים"* (Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

"It was in exile that I beheld visions of God." Men of purity are part of the *טרכבה* of God and are shown as bearers of Divine revelations, no matter where they may dwell. This same thought was already expressed in Genesis 35, 13. *ויעיל פעליו אלקים במקומות אשר רבר אותו* (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid. "Wherever there dwells a man who is worthy of God's nearness and deserves that God should reveal Himself to him, that place will become a site where God is near and reveals Himself. Man, not the place, was the basis and precondition for the special presence of God that became manifest there."

It is imperative that this fundamental truth should be recorded at the very opening of our Book of Exile.

*זהagi בתקון הנולא*: The precise location of this particular exile is not immediately identified. What is said here applies to any place of exile, wherever it may be. as the Mechilta comments: *במקומות סודרי של שם* God is ready to have His *שכינה* dwell in any place of purity that is fit to be a site for His glory. Only after that (in Verse 3) are we told that the subject of this narration is the call that went forth to Ezekiel. We will give credence to this

2. On the fifth day of the month—it was the fifth year after King Yoyachin had been carried off into exile—

3. That the word of God came to Yechezkel, son of Buzi, the priest, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the River K'var, and there the hand of God came upon him.

בְּחַמְשָׁה לְיֹרֶשׁ הַיּוֹא הַשְׁנִינָה  
הַחֲמִישִׁית לְכָלֹת הַמֶּלֶךְ יוֹכֵן:

3. הִיְהָ קְנִיעָה רַבְּרִירָה אֶל־  
יְחִזְקָאֵל בָּנְדֻבּוּן הַכָּבָן בָּאָרֶץ  
בְּשָׂעִיר עַל־נְהַר־קְבָּר וְתַהֲרֵי עַלְיוֹן  
שֵׁם יְרִירָה:

Prophet's message because God must have men who will uphold His glory even in exile.

**מְרָאֹת אֱלֹקִים** (singular **מְרָאָה**): See Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 12, 6–8. **מְרָאָה** as distinct from **מְרָאָה**. **מְרָאָה** implies a sight perceived directly, a sight of which one should become thoroughly aware. **מְרָאָה** refers to the awareness of an image in the form of a reflection, hence also a mirror. He beholds the Divine revelation not directly but only in a reflection. "In order to draw his conclusions about the One Who reveals Himself to him, he must rely on **מְרָאֹת הַלִּילָה**" (See also Genesis 46, 2).

Isaiah, too, beheld a "manifestation of God" when he was first called to be a prophet. He saw the glory of God withdrawing from the Sanctuary; only the edges of His throne still filled the Holy Place. He heard the call of the Seraphim, the heavenly hosts in the service of God, welcoming the entry of God's **שְׁכִינָה** into their midst with a mighty **קָדוֹשָׁה** that caused the very pillars of the Sanctuary to tremble (Isaiah 6, 1–4).

But in the Book of Isaiah this description is outlined with only a few brief strokes. It is not presented as a superscription at the opening of the book. The account in the Book of Isaiah is preceded by five chapters intended to help us understand the message of the revelation that follows. In the Book of Ezekiel, however, the chapter containing the call that went forth to the Prophet comes at the very outset. The various aspects of **מְרָאֹת אֱלֹקִים** are developed in detail, and the reference to the call is preceded by a statement to the effect that it had indeed been given to a human being to perceive **מְרָאֹת אֱלֹקִים**. Therefore, our Sages comment: **כִּי מְרָאָה יְחִזְקָאֵל רָאָה שְׁעִירָה לְפָנֵי יְהוָה וְתַהֲרֵי יְהוָה לְפָנֵי כָּנָף שְׁרָתָה** (**תַּגִּינה י'ג:**) "That which Ezekiel beheld, Isaiah had beheld also. Isaiah may be compared to a city dweller who beholds the king; Ezekiel may be likened to a villager who beholds the king."

Here we have the significant distinction between the calls that went forth to these two men. It is not surprising that Isaiah should have beheld manifestations of God within sight of God's Sanctuary and on holy ground.

4. וְאָרָא וְהִנֵּה רוח סערה באה  
טונחצפון עגנו גראל ואש  
מטלהחת ונגה לו סקיב וטוטובה  
בעין החטט מתחוד האש:

5-27. . .

Only he must record the sad fact that he beheld the glory of God not entering but only withdrawing from the Sanctuary. Not so Ezekiel. It was given to him to behold manifestations of God not in a holy place, where he might have expected to see them, but in the *golah*, in exile.

That which no one would have believed had come to pass. God has followed His people into exile. The nearness of the Divine **שכינה** can be regained even in exile. This is the purpose of the Prophet's vocation; it is to be his life's work.

היה היה, preceded by the infinitive form for emphasis: that which no one would have believed or expected had come to pass. **בוכחות אבותות-היה היה:** Having described our forefathers as His **טרכבה**, God expects that, no matter what the time or place, there will always be men, such as our forefathers, who will dedicate themselves to act as bearers of God's revealed glory. The man to whom **טראות אלקים** were shown was to become the messenger of the Word of God in order to work for the restoration, the rebirth and the everlasting glory of the nation that had been exiled to Babylonia under King Jechoniah.

**יוחזקאל בן ברוח הכהן:** Ezekiel was a **כהן** like Jeremiah, inspired and strengthened by God, in the spirit of Pinchas. (יוחזקאל), ready to serve the cause of God with selfless devotion.

**בארץ כשדים:** It was in the land of the Chaldeans that Ezekiel received the call to become a man of God. **על נור נבר:** It was on alien soil, on the banks of a river in a foreign land, in the midst of the exile, that the heavens opened up before him. The hand of God came upon him even in that place (**זה עליו שם**).

רואה רוח נבואה: "The spirit of prophecy does not originate from within a man. It comes upon a man from the outside and rests upon him. It is a 'hand' of God, יְדָה, that touches the man, a Divine gift whose bearer, harbinger and messenger man then becomes. It comes to him, upon him, from outside from on high, raising him above the level of normal humanity and raising his human quality to a level leading toward the Divine. Whatever he will say or do will be words and acts of God; the man is only His messenger and the executor of His will" (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11, 17).

**Verse 4 ff.** "Did not Ezekiel see in his vision how physical and spiritual life unfolds out of midnight storms and clouds, fire and glare; how all things

- ו. ומתחילה דמות ארכע חיות זהה בנצחון איש  
סראיהו רמיות אדם להנעה:  
אל-עابر פניו ולבו:  
ו. ורמות פניהם פני אָדָם  
ונפשו ארעה אל-תִּתְּמַשֵּׁן לארבעתם  
ונרנ"שׁור מהשפטם לארבעתם  
ונרנ"נשׁר לארבעתם:  
כעין נחשת קלה:  
ו. ונפשיהם ובנפשיהם פרדות  
סלמגלה לאיש שתים חברות  
על ארבעת רבעיהם ונפשיהם  
ובנפשיהם לארבעתם:  
. 9. חברות אשה אל-אחותה<sup>12</sup> ואיש אל-עابر פניו ולבו אל  
נויותינה:

living, on every level of development, unite in order to be bearers of the Throne of Divine Glory; how everything—in the service of God—moves on a straight course to the goal toward which the spirit directs it and never deviates from this course. . . ." (See *Collected Writings*, Volume I, p. 247).

של לי חוקיו אלפי רכבות של מלכיթה שרתה שם עופרים לפני ומקדשים שמי גדול בכל יום תפדר (חנן דבי אליהו פ"ז), והחיות הרוח והשׁוב רצים לעשו שליחותו (בראשית ר' ר' כ). That is how He permits him to comprehend God's sublime essence and to sense the nearness of His Providence. God plans and guides the fate of men and nations, could the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man. He allows the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man.

That is how He permits him to comprehend God's sublime essence and to sense the nearness of His Providence. God plans and guides the fate of men and nations, could the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man. He allows the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man. על דעת הכסא רשות כתראה אדם, גROL כחן של נבאים שמד מן את הארץ ליזורה (בראשית ר' ר' כ). That is how He permits him to comprehend God's sublime essence and to sense the nearness of His Providence. God plans and guides the fate of men and nations, could the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man. He allows the prophet to understand the God-ordained vocation of man.

Man's great potential for causes even angels to fall silent in the midst of their homage to God. נא עם כשעה שישראל ואmortים שמע ישראל שותקים ואחד רק חרפינה וכור (בראשית ר' ר' כ). Man's great potential for causes even angels to fall silent in the midst of their homage to God. נא עם כשעה שישראל ואmortים שמע ישראל שותקים ואחד רק חרפינה וכור (בראשית ר' ר' כ).

"Who would be so presumptuous as to attempt to describe such a vision in exact detail?" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 24, 10). Let us, rather, remain humbly silent, but at the same time proudly and happily aware that we possess such a proclamation of God's glory in our Book of Exile.

- אשר יהוה-שָׁמָה הַרְיוֹת לְכַת<sup>21</sup> ו. בְּלִכְתָּם יָלְכוּ וּבְעַמְּדָם יַעֲטְרוּ  
וּבְהַגְּשָׁאָם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ יַגְשְׁאוּ  
ו. וּרְמוֹת הַחַיוֹת מִרְאֵיהֶם  
בְּגַחְלִיאָש בְּעַרְוֹת בְּמִרְאֵה  
הַלְּפָרִים הִיא מִתְהֻלְּכָת בֵּין  
הַחַיוֹת וּנְגַה לְאָשׁ וּמִרְהָאָשׁ יוֹצֵא  
בָּרֶק:  
רְאֵיכֶם מִלְמָעָלה:  
וּמְחַת הַרְקִיעַ בְּנֶפֶיךְ<sup>22</sup>  
יִשְׂרָהָא אֲשָׁה אַל-אֲחֹתָה לְאִישׁ  
שְׁתִים מִכְסּוֹת לְהַגָּה וּלְאִישׁ  
שְׁתִים מִכְסּוֹת לְהַגָּה אֵת  
שְׁנוּיוֹתֵיכֶם:  
וְאַשְׁקָע אַתְ-קָול בְּנֶפֶיךְ<sup>23</sup>  
בְּקוּל מִים רְבִים בְּקוּל-שְׁדוֹ  
בְּלִכְתָּם קָול בְּטַלָּה בְּקוּל מִתְגָּהָה  
בְּעַמְּדָם תְּרַפִּינָה בְּנֶפֶיךְ:  
וְהַיְקָול מֵעַל לְרָקִיעַ אֲשֶׁר  
עַל-רְאָשָׁם בְּעַמְּדָם תְּרַפִּינָה  
בְּנֶפֶיךְ:  
וּמְפָעֵל לְרָקִיעַ אֲשֶׁר עַל-<sup>24</sup>  
רְאָשָׁם כְּמִרְאֵה אַכְזָרְסִיר דָּמוֹת  
כְּפָא תַּעַל דָּטוֹת הַכְּסָא דָּמוֹת  
כְּמִרְאֵה אַרְם עַלְיוֹ מִלְמָעָלה:  
וְאָרָא | בְּעַן חַשְׁפֵל כְּמִרְאֵה<sup>25</sup>  
אֲשֶׁר בִּית-לְהָ סְבִיב כְּמִרְאֵה  
מִתְגַּנוּ וּלְמָעָלה וּמִפְרָאֵה מִתְגַּנוּ  
וּלְפָהָרָאֵת וּגְשָׁאָל עַלְפָתָם כִּי רַיִם  
הַחַיוֹת בְּאָופְנִים:  
לוּ סְבִיב:

28. —and I saw and fell upon my face and heard a Voice that spoke.

כְּפֶרְאָה הַקְּשָׁת אֲשֶׁר וְהִיא  
בָּעֵנָן כִּיּוֹם הַנְּשָׁם בֶּן מִרְאָה  
הַגָּנָה סְבִיב הַוָּא מִרְאָה רְמֻוֹת  
כְּבָרוּדְיוֹתָה וְאַרְאָה וְאַפְּלָל עַל-פָּנָיו  
וְאַשְׁקָעַן קָלָל קָרְבָּר: ס

**Chap. 2. 1.** He said to me: Son of mankind, stand upon your feet and I will speak with you.

בָּן וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים בֶּן-אָדָם עַמְּךָ  
עַל-רְגָנְלִיךְ וְאַרְבָּר אַתָּה:

*Verse 28.* Ezekiel beheld this vision, and even before he could hear words, he fell upon his face, ready to serve and to fulfill the task to which he had been summoned. So we read: "וַיַּלְאֶבְרָהָם עַל פְּנֵיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְאַחֲרָיו" "And Abraham fell upon his face and God spoke to him." "The act of prostration expresses the surrender of man's independence. By covering his face at the same time, he ceases to see; he can only hear; he has relinquished his physical and spiritual independence to the Master, in the manner of the angels around the throne of God, who cover their faces and their feet (Isaiah 6, 2) and are ready to unfold the wings of their strength only in order to obey the command of God" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 17, 3).

**Chapter 2, Verse 1.** *בן אדם*: In Psalm 80,18 Israel is described as *בן אדם*: "The son of humanity, the first son of a future generation of humanity, awaiting the hour of its rebirth.—It is only in this sense that God chose Israel, not in order to imply rejection of the rest of mankind but to help all men attain the most lofty goals of salvation. That is why Ezekiel, the Prophet of the *בֵית שְׁלֵישִׁי*, the Third Sanctuary that will arise someday and remain for all eternity, is primarily described as *בן אדם*" (see Hirsch Commentary, *ibid.*).

The term *אדם* denotes humanity in its purest form (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1, 26).

The purpose of the Prophet's mission was to help bring about the rebirth not only of Israel but of all of mankind. Jeremiah, too, had been sent on his mission as *נבִיא לְוֹרָט* (see *Collected Writings*, Volume IV, p. 23).

*ונִזְמָדָר:* God's call went forth to the Prophet only when the Prophet stood erect before God. (However, see *נֶלְגָד עַיִינִים* in the case of Balaam, Numbers 24, 4.) It is God's wish that the man He has chosen as the messenger of His Word should have the ability to communicate His will effectively. "Our prophecy is not the product of a morbid imagination, of abnormal

2. And spirit entered into me when He spoke to me and set me up on my feet; and I heard what He, expressing Himself, spoke to me.

3. He said to me: Son of mankind, I will send you to the sons of Israel, to the tribes that are in rebellion, that have rebelled against Me. They and their fathers have transgressed against Me to this very day.

וְוַתָּבֹא בִּי רُוח בְּאַשֶּׁר רָכַב  
אֵלִי וְתַעֲמַדְנִי עַל־רְגָלֵי וְאַשְׁפַּע  
אֶת מִרְכָּבֶךָ אֵלֵיכָ פ'

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִי בְּנֵוֹרָם שׁוֹלֵחַ אָנִי  
אָוֹתֶךָ אֶל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־נוֹרָם  
הַמּוֹרְכָּבִים אֲשֶׁר מִרְוִי־בָּי בְּפֶה  
וְאֶבְכָּתָם פְּשָׁעָיו בַּי עַד־עֲצָם הַיּוֹם  
הַזֶּה:

agitation; rather, it is part of life—healthy, creative, alert and cheerful" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 18,3).

*Verse 2.* וְחַי עַל־יְדֵי הַיְתָרָה בְּרֹוח (Chapter 1, 3) and וְחַבְכָא בְּרֹוח (Chap. 11,5) (see Commentary on Chapter 1). In the present verse refers not to the spirit of prophecy but to an "intensification, an elevation of the spirit, of the inner self. The consequences of such spiritual talents and inspiration did not transcend the normal capacities of human beings." (Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,17).

קָרְבָּן: as in Numbers 7,89.

*Verse 3.* The mission of the Prophet is to reach the "sons of Israel," the members of that nation who, despite the differences that divide them, are united by the one Divine destiny they hold in common, a destiny that was spelled out for them by their common ancestors. Thus united, this nation should rally around God and His Law. They were to be נָגוּם, nations. וְיָהַלְלָה מִךָּ, "a nation and a community of nations shall be from you. . . ." "Each tribe was to represent a distinct, individual entity within the warrior nation, the merchant nation, the agricultural nation, the nation of scholars, etc. In this manner, it will become clear to all the world that the devotion and consecration of human life to the covenant of the Law of God is not dependent or conditional on any particular calling in life or national characteristics. All mankind in all its diversity is called upon to accept the reality of God as taught by Israel, and thus to mold all the different individual and national traits in mankind into one united Kingdom of God" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 35,11).

While the Prophet is still under the impact of the revelation of the Providence of God, to Whose sovereignty all the forces of the universe give their allegiance, the Word of God points out to him that a group of men have rebelled against God. The בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל have become נָגוּם הַמְּרוּדִים.

4. And the sons are hard-faced and stiff-hearted—to them I send you and you shall say to them: Thus has God spoken, my Lord, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

5. And whether they will listen or whether they will leave it—for they are a house of disobedience—they will still know that there has been a Prophet in their midst.

6. And you, son of mankind, be not afraid of them, and be not afraid of their words for this-

וְהַבָּנִים קָשֵׁי פָנִים וְחֹזְקִיבָב  
אֲנִי שׁוֹלֵח אֶתְכֶם אֲלֵיכֶם וְאָמְרָתֶם  
אֲלֵיכֶם כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה:

וְהַמִּתְחָדָה אֲמִינְשָׁקָעָו וְאִמְתִּיחָדָלוּ  
כִּי בֵית מֶרֶרֶת הַמִּתְחָדָה וְנָרְעָו כִּי נְבָיא  
הַיְהָ בְּתוֹכָם: ס

וְאַתָּה בָּנוֹ אָרָם אֶלְתִּירָא מִלּוּם  
וּמְרֻבְּרִים אֶלְתִּירָא כִּי סְרָבִים

**שָׁבֵן:** These men, like their ancestors before them, have demonstrated their disgraceful contempt for the intimate bond that at one time had linked them with God. (**שָׁבֵן**, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 50,17).

*Verse 4.* The sons have eliminated God entirely from their lives. They single-mindedly pursue the goals they have set for themselves (**פְּנִים**); they will allow nothing to stand in the way of their ambitions (**לָבֶן**).

The Prophet is to confront them with the words of God. This phrase embodies the very essence of his life's mission. This is the name most frequently used in the parlance of the Prophets and other men of God to describe their relationship with Him. The term **שָׁבֵן**, which is pronounced as **אָלִיקָם**, denotes God's loving kindness when it manifests itself in the form of stern justice. **אָרְנוּנִי** expresses complete preparedness to do whatever God may wish us to do; it is total devotion to the will of God. The second appellation for God denotes "the full conviction that even when He sits in judgment over us and denies us our wishes, God is still the God of love" (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 3, 24). The demand of the hour is to set up God's throne once more in the midst of men that have become estranged from Him so that He may resume His sovereignty over them. His will rules the world, shaping the destinies of men and guiding a fallen mankind toward a new and better future, even though He must do so by inflicting punishment and suffering.

*Verse 5.* Initially, the word of God as conveyed by the Prophet will fall on deaf ears. It will not bring about the hoped for change in the hearts of men. But the events that will follow will confirm the Prophet's message in no uncertain terms. **וְנִ** will reveal Himself to them from amidst the thunder of catastrophic events and bear witness to the veracity of His prophet's mission.

ties and thorns are with you, and among scorpions you dwell; do not be afraid of their words and do not tremble before them, even though they are a house of disobedience,

7. You shall speak My words to them; whether they will listen or whether they will leave it, for the embodiment of disobedience are they.

8. But as for you, son of mankind, hear what I will say to you; do not present the same image of disobedience as this house of disobedience; open your mouth and eat that which I will give you.

9. Then I looked and, behold, a hand was stretched out toward me and, behold! it held a scroll of a book.

10. He spread it out before me, and it had writing on the front and on the reverse, and its inscription read: "Lamentations," "Meditations" and "Life Emergent."

וְסֻלּוֹנִים אָוֶתֶךְ וְאַלְעֲקָרְבִּים  
אַתָּה יוֹשֵׁב מִדְכָּרִים אֶל־  
תִּירָא וּמִפְּנֵיכֶם אֶל־תְּחִתָּה כִּי  
בֵּית מְרִי הַמְּהָ:

וְוְבָרְתָּ אֶת־דְּבָרַי אֱלֹהִים אֶם־  
יְשָׁמְעוּ וְאִמְצְּחָלְיוּ כִּי מְרִי הַמְּהָ:

ט

וְאַתָּה בְּנֵדָרֶם שְׁכַנֵּת אֶת־אָשָׁר־  
אָנֹי מִדְבָּר אֶלְיךָ אֶל־תְּהִימָּרוֹ  
כְּבִית רַמְּרִי פְּצָחָ פְּקָד וְאֶלְלָ אֶת־  
אָשָׁר־אָנֹי נִתְּנוּ אֶלְיךָ:

וְוְאֶרְאָה וְהַנְּהִיר שְׁלֹוחָ אֶלְיָ  
וְהַנְּהִיר מִגְּלַת־סְפָר:

ז. וַיַּפְרַשׂ אַתָּה לִפְנֵי וְהִיא  
כְּתֻובָה פְּנִים וְאַחֲרָה וְקַטוּב אֶלְיהָ  
קָנִים וְקָנָה וְהִי ס

**בֵּית מְרִי** Insubordination to God is, alas, the only bond that unites this people so tragically disunited in every other respect (גּוֹם הַמְּדֻדִּים, Verse 3).

**Verses 6–7.** The Prophet is warned that he must be prepared for fierce and hostile opposition. No one will be ready to listen to him. He will encounter malice and hostility at every turn. As Jeremiah after him (Jeremiah Chap. 1,8), this Prophet, too, will be expected to meet these onslaughts with courage and fearless determination. **סְרָב**, lit. "obstinate, adamantly rebellious."

**Verse 8.** God expects complete obedience from the Prophet, no matter how difficult the Prophet might find this. **פְּנָה—פְּנָה** is related to **פְּנָה**. "Wherever the word **פְּנָה** occurs in Scripture, it denotes an act of opening by force, against the will of the object or by compelling circumstances" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 4,11). Ezekiel is commanded to open his mouth in order to accept that which will be put before him by the hand of God.

**Verses 9–10.** The Prophet is given a scroll in which the essence of

his mission has been set down. The scroll contains only three words: קינות= "Lamentation," הנה= "Thought" and חי= "Life Emergent" (See *Collected Writings*, Vol. III, p. 40).

הנה and חי in Scripture are frequently rendered as a cry of grief or sorrow (ננה=הנין). Comments by our Sages would indicate that our own translation may not be entirely inadmissible.

זה טורענותם של צדיקים בעולם הוות קינות (ערובין כב): The Sages take קינות to refer to the great afflictions that are visited upon the righteous in this world. Indeed, the Prophet (Chapter 32) breaks into a heartrending elegy over the downfall of Egypt (שא קינה על פרעה מלך מצרים). True, this lamentation refers to Egypt and all the other nations that have disappeared before and after her. But the Prophet's expression of grief relates also to Egypt and all the other nations that have disappeared before and after her.

As long as misery and despair will not vanish from the earth, it will be impossible for the righteous to accomplish their life's purpose. Seeking to bring redemption to a suffering world, they are themselves drawn into the chaos of flames that will not be extinguished until mankind will allow the righteous of humanity to lead them onto the path to Paradise. The Book of our Prophet is replete with the anguished cries (קינות) that will arise during mankind's tormented history (טורענותם של צדיקים בעולם הזה).

זה. זה מבחן שכך של צדיקים לעמיד לכא וכחיא עלי הגין בכנורו: הנה denotes the deep and thoughtful reflection which, even amidst the sad events of the present, can envisage the ultimate triumph of righteousness. The Book of our Prophet also contains in the meaning of the הנה that poured forth from the lyre of David, whom every Sabbath inspired with renewed confidence that ultimately the Divine ideal must triumph in a world that was, after all, created by God in order to serve His purposes. David was able to foresee how brutality and evil would vanish from the earth and nations estranged from God would prepare their own graves while צדיק נחمر יפרח (Psalms 92,4) the cause of the righteous would ripen toward everlasting triumph. This type of הנה is contained also in the words of Ezekiel; he, too, proclaims the ultimate reward for the just—*מבחן שכך של צדיקים לפחד לבא*.

זה. וזה טורענותם של רשותם לעמיד לבא וכחיא להה על הוה תבא: חי denotes destruction and annihilation. According to the Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 91,3, הוה being the *pi'el* form of may denote the opposite of existence, its cessation and annihilation). Hence חי probably alludes to the restructuring of world conditions (חייה) that will follow the downfall of the wicked (הה). God may bring destruction upon His world, but He will also cause new life to blossom forth from among the ruins. אני ברצתי משוחח לתבל (Isaiah 54,16). The Book of Ezekiel gives expression to this truth in all its passages that refer to טורענותם של רשותם לעמיד לבא.

These three words, הנה, קינות, and חי, comprise the contents of the scroll; they fill its "front and back." They convey the clear understanding that the

**Chap. 3. 1.** And He said to me: Son of mankind, eat that which you will find, eat this scroll and then go, speak to the house of Israel.

**2.** I opened my mouth, and He caused me to eat that scroll.

**3.** And He said to me: Son of mankind, feed your stomach and fill your innards with this scroll which I give you. I ate it and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey.

**ג. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי בָנְאָדָם אֶת־אֲשֶׁר־תִּמְצֵא אֹכֵל אֹכֵל אֶת־הַמִּגְלָה הַזֹּאת וְלֹךְ דָּבָר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָאֵל:**

**ב. וְאָפַתֵּח אֶת־פִּי וַיַּאֲכַלֵּנִי אֶת־הַמִּגְלָה הַזֹּאת:**

**ד. וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי בָנְאָדָם בְּטֻנוּ תְאַכֵּל וּמְעִיר תִּמְלָא אֶת־הַמִּגְלָה הַזֹּאת אֲשֶׁר אָנֹן נָתַן אֲלֵיךְ וַיַּאֲכַלֵּה וַתֵּהַי בְּפִי בְּרַכֵּשׁ לְקֹתוֹק:** ס

Word of God will always have to be perceived in its twofold meaning: even where it announces destruction and uprooting, its true purpose is to replant and rebuild (see Jeremiah 1, 10).

Essentially, these three words convey the same message as those addressed to the Prophet in Verse 4: כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִי אַלְקִים כִּי. From these words we perceive that God as the God of justice, inflicts unspeakable suffering upon His mankind, we discern in Him the God of mercy Who, in His loving kindness, works to educate man and shapes the future of mankind. It is to be hoped that the reflection on the new, better existence emerging from catastrophe should transform even the most poignant lamentation over a sorrow-laden present into an expression of firm trust and hope in God's eternal love. The Prophet is to see that this should come to pass.

**Chapter 3, Verse 1.** Ezekiel has been told to absorb the contents of this scroll and then to go forth to speak to the "House of Israel." In doing so, he must perceive בית טרי (as Israel is called in Chapter 2, Verse 6) as בית יִשְׂרָאֵל, that nation of Israel whose members will some day regard themselves once again as members of one family, as the bearers of one common sacred heritage. His mission is to transform בית טרי into בית יִשְׂרָאֵל.

**Verse 2–3.** Note the use of אֶת־פִּי as distinct from פִּי (Chapter 2, Verse 8). Though God expected that Ezekiel would be reluctant to obey His call (תְּמַמָּה), Ezekiel readily opened his mouth, and that heavy scroll, laden with tears of sorrow, became as sweet as honey in his mouth. Seeing that it was God Who had handed the scroll to him as a document of His Providence, should it come as a surprise that Ezekiel tasted the sweetness of honey even in a

4. He said to me: Son of mankind, come to the house of Israel and speak with My words to them.

5. For you are not sent to a people of ponderous speech and heavy tongue. [but] to the house of Israel.

6. Not to many peoples of ponderous speech and heavy tongue, whose language you do not understand; and even though I have not sent you to them, *they* will listen to you!

7. The house of Israel is not willing to listen to you, for they are not willing to listen to Me; for

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְيָהוּ בְּנֵי־אָתָם לְדִבָּרָ  
אֱלֹהִים יְשָׂרָאֵל וְגַבְرָתְךָ בְּרָכָי  
אֲלֵיכֶם:

5. כִּי־לֹא אַל־עַם עַמְקֵי שְׁפָה וּכְבָנִי  
לְשׁוֹן אַתָּה שְׁלוֹחַ אֱלֹהִים יְשָׂרָאֵל:

6. לֹא אַל־עַטְמִים רְבִים עַמְקֵי שְׁפָה  
וּכְבָנִי לְשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־תִּשְׁמַע  
דְּכָרְיוֹם אַסְלָא אֲלֵיכֶם שְׁלֹחָתֵיךְ  
הַשְּׁפָה יְשִׁמְעוּ אֶלְيָהוּ:

7. וְבָית יְשָׂרָאֵל לֹא יָאֵכוּ לְשִׁמְעַ  
אֶלְיָהוּ כִּי־אַנְתָּם אַכְּבִּים לְשִׁמְעַ אֶלְיָהוּ

cup filled with sorrow? Ezekiel is a worthy companion of Jeremiah. In the same vein, Jeremiah exclaims: "Whenever words were found, I absorbed them (אכלת); Your word, one in all its diversity, became for me a joy, a rejoicing for my heart" (Jeremiah 15,16).

*Verses 4 ff.* Ezekiel dedicates himself to become the willing messenger of the Word of God, confident that his efforts will ultimately be crowned with success. The hand of God arms him with the iron strength he will need to set out on his arduous task. Ezekiel was prepared to face numerous obstacles (Chapter 2, Verses 4 ff.). But he could not have imagined how immensely difficult it would really be. Not to be understood might not be so hard to bear, but to find that no one wants to understand can truly cause bitter pain. After all, בֵּית יְשָׂרָאֵל should certainly have been able to understand a message such as כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִי אֵיךְ (Ch. 2, V.4) in all its tragic significance.

*Verse 5.* When שָׁמֶן is used in context with לְשָׁמֶן, the former denotes the outer expression of speech; the latter, its deeper meaning. The message of Ezekiel should not be beyond the understanding of בֵּית יְשָׂרָאֵל. Israel has heard similar messages before, but it has refused to listen. Moreover, it may be assumed that the deeper import of this message is not unknown to Israel.

*Verses 6–7.* The Prophet's message will not remain a closed book forever even to the nations of the world. But as צְדָקָה נָנָה (Ch.2) it will be Ezekiel's task to bring the word of God to them as well.

all the house of Israel are strong of forehead and hard of heart.

8. But behold, I have made your face strong against their face, your forehead strong against their forehead.

9. Like *shamir*, harder than rock have I made your forehead; you will not be afraid of them; you will not tremble before them, even though they are a house of disobedience.

10. And He said to me: Son of mankind, all My words which I shall speak to you, take them into your heart and hear them with your ears.

11. And go, come to the *golah*, to the sons of your people, speak to them and say to them: Thus has

בְּכֶלֶבֶית יִשְׂרָאֵל חֲזֹקִים מִצָּחָה  
וּקְשִׁירַלְכָ הַפּוֹה:

9. הַגָּה נְתַתִּי אֶת־פְּנֵיכֶם חֲזֹקִים  
לְעַמֶּת פְּנֵיכֶם וְאֶת־מִצָּחָה חֲזָקָה:  
לְעַמֶּת מִצָּחָם:

9. בְּשִׁמְרַת חֲזָקָה מֵאָרֶן נְתַתִּי  
מִצָּחָק לְאֶתְיָרָא אֶתְסָמֵךְ לְאֶתְתַּחַת  
מִפְנֵיכֶם כִּי בֵּית־מְרִי הַפּוֹה: פ

10. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים בְּנֵי־אָדָם אֶת־כֵּל־  
רֶכֶבְיוֹ אֲשֶׁר אֶרְכֶר אֶלְיךָ קָח  
בְּלִבְכֶךָ וּבְאוֹנוֹגֵךָ שְׁמַע:

11. וְלֹךְ בָּא אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה אֶל־בְּנֵי  
עָמָק וְדַבֵּר תְּאַلְּהֵם וְאֶמְרֵת

**בְּנֵי־אָדָם לֹא עַלְيָה שְׁלֹחַךְ:** Even though his words were not addressed directly to the nations, his message was intended also for them in the expectation that, in time, it would penetrate to them. But his own people, **בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל**, has chosen not to listen. **בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** had already heard the language and the message from the Prophet on Mount Sinai, from the mouth of God Himself, but it has turned its back even on God.

**Verses 8–9.** The one who brings his message of salvation and those for whom the message is intended will confront one another, face to face, locked in a bitter struggle. Ezekiel will take up the struggle with determination and God-given strength.

**Verse 10.** One final advice from God to Ezekiel: Every word that will come to you from God, **קְחַ בְּלִבְכֶךָ**, take it to your heart; only after that, **וּבְאוֹנוֹגֵךָ שְׁמַע**—**וּבְאוֹנוֹגֵךָ שְׁמַע**—are you to perceive it with your ears. For physical perception—**בְּלִבְכֶךָ**, an understanding within the heart. Ezekiel always be preceded by **קְחַ בְּלִבְכֶךָ**, an understanding within the heart. Ezekiel will receive many commands that will presuppose a deeper understanding if his ear is not to offer resistance to what it hears.

**Verse 11.** Ezekiel is now told to whom he should address his exhortation. We might have expected that **בֵּית טָהֹרֶת המְרוּדִים** and **בֵּית טָהֹרֶת נָשָׁת** would refer to those members of the Jewish nation that still lived in their homeland and, carried

my Lord spoken, the God Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—whether they will listen or whether they will leave it.

12. And while the spirit bore me aloft, I heard behind me the voice of a great rushing: Blessed is the glory of God wherever it takes up its dwelling place.

13. —

אֱלֹהִים בָּה אָמַר אֶרְנִי יְהוָה אֱמָן  
יְשִׁמְעוּ וְאִסְמִיחָרָלוּ:

12. וְתַשְׁאֲנִי רُוחׁ נָשְׁכַע אֲחָרִי  
קוֹל רָעֵשׁ גָּרוֹל בָּרוֹךְ כְּבָרוּ-יְהוָה  
מִפְּקוּדָם:

13. וְקוֹל אֶפְנֵי הַחַיוֹת מִשְׁקָוֹת  
אֲשֶׁר אֱלֹהָתוֹתָה וְקוֹל הַאוֹפְנִים  
לְעַטְמָתָם וְקוֹל רָעֵשׁ גָּרוֹל:

away by the delusion of political independence, had remained impervious to reason and defied every Divine admonition. But this is not the case. The Prophet is told that the blunt characterization in the verses immediately preceding applies to those members of the nation who have already felt the impact of God's judgment, having been driven from their homeland some years earlier to atone in alien lands for their rebellion and their blindness.

לְךָ בָּא אֶל הַבָּلָה: The reference is to **אֶל בָּנֵי עַמּוֹ**, the people in whose midst he now finds himself. **בָּנֵי עַמּוֹ**, "a society concerning which God had proclaimed when He designated Israel to become His people, a national community whose human relationships were to demonstrate God's rulership on this earth" (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,18). But how incredibly difficult the task of the Prophet if, even following such terrible experiences, the *golah*, the exiles to which he was to address himself, were still not ready to appreciate the import of the words **כִּי אָמַר אֶרְנִי אֶלְקָם**. Therein lay the challenge to the Prophet: it was to such people that he was to convey God's message in all its shattering impact.

The Prophet is to address the people not only **זְהֻבָּה** but also **אַמְתָּה**. While **צְפָר** denotes the concise statement of an idea, **אָמַר** implies the teaching of this same idea to the listener, its thorough explanation and elaboration (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 21,1).

*Verses 12–13.* But before discouragement could sway him from his resolve, the Prophet bears a promise of the future that is "uplifting" to his "spirit." **חוֹשָׁבָנִי** **רוֹא**: "When the spirit raised me above the earth, I heard **אָתָּה** from behind me, rising from this very earth, the voice (**שָׁמֶן**) of the blessing and glorification of God that was taking place even there, on earth" (as interpreted in the Hirsch *Siddur*, p. 204). **בָּרוּךְ כִּנְדָּה הַמְּפֻקָּדָת**: The **שְׁכִינָה** of God dwells even in the *golah*; someday His **שְׁכִינָה** will dominate distant lands as well. The

14. The spirit bore me aloft and took hold of me, and I went in bitterness, in the fury of my spirit; but the hand of God rested upon me in its strength.

15. And so I came to the *golah* to [the inhabitants of] Tel Aviv, who lived by the River K'var; I dwelt where they lived, and I sat there seven days, bewildered, in their midst.

16. It came to pass at the end of the seven days that the word of God came to me:

14. וְרוּחַ נִשְׁאָתָנִי וַתִּקְרֹבֵנִי נֶאֱלָד  
מִרְ בְּקִמְתָּה רָוחִי וַיַּרְיוֹלָה עַל  
חֲזָקָה:

15. וְאָכְבֹּא אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה תֶּל אַבְּבָב  
הַשְׁכִּים אֶל־נְהַר־כְּבָר נָאָשָׂר  
הַמָּה יוֹשְׁבִים שָׁם נָאָשֵׂב שָׁם  
שְׁבֻעַת יְמִים מְשֻׁפִים בְּתוּבָם:

16. וַיְהִי מִקְצָה שְׁבֻעַת יְמִים פְּנָוָעִי  
רַבְּרִיוֹלָה אֶלְיוֹ לְאָמָר:  
נָאָשֵׂב קָרֵי

day will come when the *Shirah* of the heavenly multitudes that serve God with their "winged might" will be joined by the *Shirah* of man's homage to God from earth (see Rashi to Verse 13).

Thus did Ezekiel receive his consecration as Prophet of the *galuth*.

*Verse 14.* חֲזָקָה: The Prophet was seized by the impact of this vision, and it remained with him for the rest of his days. זֶה הַיְהּ וְכֵן: Henceforth, he was to feel the full weight of the hand of God upon his shoulders and to act as His willing instrument. But his heart was filled with pain and anger; having experienced the manifestation of God's power, he was filled with shame at the weakness and frivolity of his people that showed so little understanding for its lofty mission. The more the Prophet became determined to serve God, the greater became the rage that burned within his heart. In a similar vein Jeremiah exclaims, at once jubilant and bitter: "Your words became for me a joy, a rejoicing for my heart;" and then: כִּדְיַעֲבֵד לִי לְשָׁקֵן וְלִשְׁמַתֵּת לְבָבֵי "Your words became for me a joy, a rejoicing for my heart;" and then: כִּדְיַעֲבֵד לִי לְשָׁקֵן וְלִשְׁמַתֵּת לְבָבֵי "I sat in isolation for You had filled me with anger" (Jeremiah 15,16–17).

*Verse 15.* In this mood Ezekiel came to the people to whom he was now to devote the rest of his active life. What he sees fills him with horror. ואָשֵׂב (קָרֵי) וְאָשֵׂר (נָחָב) וְאָשֵׂר, perhaps derived from שָׁוֹר, "to behold," "to contemplate."

Dwelling in their midst, he reflects on the appalling state of affairs.

מְשֻׁפִים (from שְׁפֵט) "to be desolate, when used in connection with the spirit refers to a mental state in which the mind is incapable of formulating clear concepts or of conceiving distinct thoughts" (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 143,4). It is in this frame of mind that Ezekiel spends seven days in their midst.

*Verses 16–17.* The Word of God rouses him from his troubled state. God

17. Son of mankind, I have appointed you as a watchman for the house of Israel; when you hear a word from My mouth, you are to give them warning on My behalf.

18. When I say to the evildoer: You must die—and you do not warn him, you do not speak to warn the evildoer from his wicked ways, to win him [back] for life—he, as an evildoer, will die in his sin, but it is from your hand that I shall demand his blood.

19. But [as for] you, if you have warned the evildoer and he does not turn from his wickedness and his wicked ways, then he shall die in his sin—but you have saved your soul.

20. And if a righteous man turns from his devotion to duty and be-

17. בְּנֵי־אָדָם צִפָּה גַּתְתִּיךְ  
לְבִית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשִׁמְעָתָ מִפְּנֵי רֶבֶר  
וְהַוֹּתְרָתָ אֹתָם מִפְּנֵי:

18. בְּאַמְרֵי לְגַדֵּשׁ מוֹתָתָם וְלֹא  
הַוְתַּרְתָּ וְלֹא רְבָרָתָ ?הַוְתַּרְתָּ רְשָׁעָ  
סְרִרְבוּ הַרְשָׁעָה לְחִינְתוּ הוּא רְשָׁעָ  
בְּעֻזָּנוּ יָמוֹת וְרָקָם מִירָקָ אַבְקָשׁ:

19. וְאַתָּה כִּירְהֹוֹנְרָתָ רְשָׁעָ לְלֹא־  
שֶׁבּ מְרַשְׁעָו וּמְרַבּוּ הַרְשָׁעָ  
הַוָּא בְּעֻזָּנוּ יָמוֹת וְאַתָּה אַתְּ נִפְשָׁעָ  
הַצְּלָתָם:

20. וּבְשֹׁובּ צְדִיקָם אַזְרָקָו וְעַשְׂהָ  
עֹלָן גַּתְתִּיכְ סְכָלָל קְפָנָיו הוּא

instructs him to stand on guard for his people, as Jeremiah had done before him. It is Ezekiel's task to warn his people of the danger that threatens them. He cannot surrender to his mood of depression no matter how justifiable this might appear. He cannot evade the heavy responsibility that rests upon his shoulders.

The verses that follow set forth guidelines for Jewish leaders for all time (see our commentary to Chapter 33). שִׁמְעָתָה: it is in the name of God that he goes forth. טָמֵנִי: he must not remain silent. צִפָּה: he must warn and admonish his people in the name of God.

*Verse 17.* The wicked man has forfeited his life (*מוֹת חֲטֹאת*); this was the sentence pronounced by God Himself when man was first created (Genesis 2,17: כִּי בַּיּוֹם אֲכַלְךָ טָמֵו מוֹת חֲטֹאת). Nevertheless, the Prophet must continue to sound his warnings, even if he fears that his admonition may be to no avail; דְבָרָתָ לְהַדְרָיו: he must repeat God's commands to his people, regardless of whether or not he finds a listening ear. (This is the connotation of דְבָר.) For, if he fails to do so, רְשָׁעָה מִזְרָקָ אַבְקָשׁ, he will be held accountable; the "blood of his people" will be upon his conscience (see also Genesis 9,5).

*Verse 20.* A person who heretofore has always been loyal to his duty

comes guilty of abuse of power, and I have placed a stumbling block before him—he shall die because you did not warn him; he shall die in his sin; his dutiful deeds that he performed will not be remembered, but it is from your hand that I shall demand his blood.

**21.** But [as for] you, if you warn him, the righteous one, not to sin—he, the righteous one—and he does not sin, he shall live because he has been forewarned, and you have saved your soul.

שׁוֹת כִּי לֹא הָנְהַרְתָּו בְּחֶפְטוֹ  
יכֹּמֶת לֹא תִּזְכְּרָג צָרְקָתוֹ אֲשֶׁר  
עֲשָׂה וְרַמְוֹ טִידָךְ אַבְקָשׁ:

2. וְאַתָּה כִּי הָנְהַרְתָּו אֲצִילָק לְכָלְתוֹ  
אֲסֹא צָדִיק וְנוֹא לְאִיחָטָא חֵי  
חַיָּה כִּי נָזַר וְאַתָּה אַתְּ נִקְשָׁע  
הַצְּלָתָם:

נִקְשָׁתָיו קָרִי

stumbles and goes astray. Until now he had practiced only **צדיק**; but now he practices **עָלָל**. He has misused the high position of trust and respect he has won as the result of his previous conduct. (For **עָלָל**, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalm 7,4). God placed a stumbling block in his path to test him, and he failed the test.

**הַהְהָרָתָה**: God considers it inconceivable that one who, until now, has been a **צדיק** should not listen to timely and appropriate words of admonition. Once he has sunk so low that he has become unworthy of life itself, the fault must lie at least in part with his spiritual guide who failed to warn him with sufficient force.

**לֹא חָכָן**: This is more by way of parenthesis. His previous life of righteousness, indeed **צדיקיו** (**קָרִי**), all his many righteous acts of the past, are erased from his record, for they would only serve as accusing witness against him before the throne of God (see also **בְּחַזְקָא פֶּל הַרְאָשָׁתָה—קִידָשָׁן**).

**דְּדַמְּט מִינְךָ**: The awesome burden of responsibility will always rest upon a true leader.

**Verse 21.** The leader must warn the sinner **צדיק**—**לְכָלְתוֹ וְנָא צָדִיק**—by impressing upon him what a serious **חַלְלָה** it is when a **צדיק** turns into a sinner. **אֲשֶׁר** **אֲשֶׁר** **לֹא**: it cannot be any different; it is impossible that such an individual should be capable of withstanding the power of such an earnest **הַרְחָמָה**. (The Word of God does not even consider the possibility that such a person, warned, would remain unaffected, as in Verse 19.) **חַדְרָה**: God only awaits the moment when He will be able to grant such a person a renewed right to life.

**וְנָא צָדִיק**: Only after his admonition has caused the sinner to mend his ways may the leader rest content in the knowledge that he has done his duty.

22. And there the hand of God came upon me. He said to me: Arise, go out into the valley; there will I speak to you.

23. I arose and went out into the valley and, behold, there stands the glory of God, as the glory that I saw at the River K'var; and I fell upon my face.

24. And spirit entered into me, and set me upon my feet, and He spoke to me and said to me: Come, shut yourself within your house.

25. And you, son of mankind, behold, they have placed ropes upon you and have bound you with them, and you are not to go out into their midst.

22. וְתַהֲיוּ עַלְיוֹ שָׁם וְרִירוֹתָה נִיאָמֶר אֱלֹי קָם צָא אֶל־הַבְּקָעָה וְשָׁם אָרַבֵּר אָוֹתָה:

23. וְאָקָם וְאָצָא אֶל־הַבְּקָעָה וְהַנְּהָדֵשׁ שָׁם כְּבוֹד־יְהוָה עַמְּרָכָה כְּבָבָד אֲשֶׁר רְאִיתִי עַל־גְּנָהָרָה כְּבָר וְאָפֵל עַל־פָּנָי:

24. וְתַבְּאַדְבֵּי רָוח וְתַעֲמִרְנִי עַל־רְגָלַי וְזַרְבֵּר אֲתִי וְיֹאמֶר אֱלֹי בָּא הַשְׁנִיר בְּתוֹךְ בִּתְחָה:

25. זֹאתָה בְּן־אָרָם הַגָּהָנָתָנוּ עַל־עֲבֹתִים וְאָסְרוֹת בָּהָם וְלֹא תַצֵּא בְּתוֹךְם:

These are the requirements that should agitate the conscience of all Jewish leaders in every generation.

Given such admonitions, is Ezekiel ready to come before his people as מוכיח?

*Verses 22–23.*: God now instructs Ezekiel to withdraw from the midst of his people. In the valley, far away from his people, it will be given him once again to behold manifestations of God's almighty power. כְּבָבָד אֲשֶׁר, רְאִיתִי עַל־נֹהֶר כָּרֶב, the truths and promises imparted to him when he received the call have not changed. בְּרוּךְ בְּנֵדֶת הַמִּקְומָתוֹ (see Verse 12: בְּרוּךְ בְּנֵדֶת הַמִּקְומָתוֹ).

*Verse 24.*: We might have expected God to command Ezekiel to return into the midst of his people with renewed zeal to carry out his mission. Instead, God orders him to return to the "valley," away from the city. This command, at first glance, seems incomprehensible. Such a command required not only וְיֹאמֶר אֲתִי (V.24); וְיֹאמֶר אֱלֹי שָׁם אָרַבֵּר אָוֹת (22) but also וְיֹאמֶר אֱלֹי. The command is to isolate himself and to go into seclusion in his own home.

*Verse 25.* The Prophet, whose mission as בֶּן־אָרָם was to proclaim man's pure humanity, is now instructed not to go to his people. He has been tied with ropes, making it impossible for him even to make any move for the present.

26. I will cause your tongue to cleave to the roof of your mouth; you will fall silent and will not become one who admonishes them, for they are a house of disobedience.

27. Yet, when I will speak to you, I will open your mouth and then you shall speak to them: Thus says my Lord, the God Who reveals His loving kindness in justice. Whoever listens to it, let him listen to it; whoever leaves it, let him leave it, for they are a house of disobedience.

וְלֹשׁוֹנֶךָ אַרְבֵּק אַל-חֲפֵץ  
וְאַלְמַתָּה לְאִתְהָיוֹת לָהֶם לְאִישׁ  
מַיְכִיחַ כִּי בֵּית מְרִי הַמְּהָה:

וְבָרְכֵי אַוְתָּךְ אַפְּתַח אֶת-דְּפֵיךְ  
יֹאמְרָת אֱלֹהִים כִּי אָמַר אָרוֹן  
יוָהָה הַשְׁפָעָה | יִשְׁמַע וְהַחֲנֵל |  
חֶלְבֵּךְ כִּי בֵּית מְרִי הַמְּהָה: ס

*Verse 26.* Only a short while ago, God had impressed upon Ezekiel the full seriousness of the responsibility incumbent upon every man. And now the Prophet is commanded to fall silent. Henceforth his tongue must cleave to the roof of his mouth. His tongue is not to be his tool for his mission as a prophet in the midst of the people.

*Verse 27.* Only upon an explicit command from God will the Prophet be permitted to open his mouth again. At that time, his lips will utter the moving message "as it is," regardless of whether or not his words will be heard and understood.

Ezekiel has just received his call from God a second time. For the present, the road to action is not yet open to the prophet. Indeed, the word "prophet" appeared to him in the valley, far away from these people who still do not accept him in their midst. The Prophet will have to speak to the people in a different manner. Only after the shattering impact of the events about to happen will he break the shackles that now restrain the Prophet will his tongue become untied and the path to the hearts of his people will become open to him (see Chapters 24,27 and 33,22).

Where words fail, it is left to events and actions to speak their own eloquent language.

In the next chapter, Ezekiel is instructed to perform a series of symbolic acts designed to rouse the people from their complacency.

**Chap. 4.** 1. But [as for] you, son of mankind, take yourself a brick, place it before yourself and engrave upon it a city: Yerushalayim.

2. And lay siege against it and build a rampart against it and cast up a mound against it and arrange camps against it and set up battering rams against it.

3. And you shall take yourself an iron griddle and place it as an iron wall between yourself and the city; and you shall turn your face toward it and it shall be besieged, and you shall lay siege against it; let this be a sign for the house of Israel.

ד. וְאַתָּה בֶּן-אָדָם קְחֵלֶךְ לְבָנָה  
וְגִתְּתָה אֹתָהּ לְפָנֶיךָ תְּקוֹתָה עֲלָיוֹ  
עִיר אֶת-יְרוּשָׁלָם:

ה. וְגִתְּתָה עֲלָיוֹ מַצּוֹרָה בְּנִיתָה עַלְיָהּ  
דְּקִיקָה וְשִׁפְקָתָה עַלְיָהּ סָלָה וְגִתְּתָה  
עַלְיָהּ מְחֻנּוֹת וְשִׁימָצְלָה בְּרִים  
סְכִיבָה:

ו. וְאַתָּה קְחֵלֶךְ טְחִיבָת בָּרְזֶל  
וְגִתְּתָה אֹתָהּ קַיְרָבְרָזֶל בֵּין-ךְ וּבֵין  
הָעִיר וְהַכִּינְתָּה אֶת-פָנָיו אֶלְيָהּ  
וְהִוָּתָה בְּפִצּוֹר וְצִרְתָּה עַלְיָהּ אַזְתָּה  
הִיא לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

**Chapter 4, Verse 1.** One symbolic gesture follows the other, each spelled out in detail. First, Ezekiel is told to take a tablet of clay, set it before himself and engrave upon it (קְרָב) the outlines of a city. That city is Jerusalem. Thus does he see the City of God arise before his eyes. Our forefathers had also made bricks from clay to build cities for Pharaoh. Now, from this time forward, their descendants were to be preparing bricks of a different kind in the service of God toward the upbuilding of God's Kingdom on earth (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 24,10). They were to build Jerusalem, the city of God, the almighty King (see Psalm 48).

**Verse 2.** Ezekiel is instructed to prepare the siege, the ultimate destruction of that city with his own hands. The same hands that built the city have now been ordered to demolish it. כָּר (lit. "sheep") denotes an instrument used in laying siege to a city; i.e. a battering ram.

**Verse 3.** טְחִיבָת, lit. "a griddle," a flat, rimless pan (see Leviticus 2,5). This is to represent a wall of iron to separate the city from the Prophet—a tragic separation. Jerusalem is no longer the City of God. God has been forced out from it. An iron wall has arisen, separating God from His city: הַקִּיר בֵּין-וּבִגְדָּלָם (Chapter 43, Verse 8). The Prophet's eyes are fixed upon the city, a city under siege. מִרְאָה לְפָנֶיךָ: But the enemy that has laid siege to this city is none other than the Prophet himself. God has made war on His own city (see Jeremiah 21,5: מִלְחָמָה עִמָּךְ).

**4.** And you lie down upon your left side and let the sin of the house of Israel weigh upon it; according to the number of the days that you will lie upon your left side shall you carry their sin.

**5.** I will give you the years of their sin for the number of the

וְאַתָּה שֹׁכֵב עַל־צְדָקָה הַשְׂמָלִי  
שְׁמַת אֶת־עַזּוֹן בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַלְיוֹ  
סְפִיר הַיְמִים אֲשֶׁר תִּשְׁכַּב עַלְיוֹ  
זֶשְׁא אֶת־שׂוֹנֵם:  
וְאַנְיִ נְתַתִּי לְךָ אֶת־שְׁנִי עַזּוֹן  
יְסִפְרֵ יָמִים שְׁלִשׁ־מְאוֹת

**Acknowledgment:** God's nation in *golah* has already endured exile for years. In the events of history had not yet begun their work of purification. *ישראל* is still *טוי*. Exiled, they are far away from their homeland, but they know that Jerusalem and the Temple are still standing. Those who have remained in the homeland still stubbornly cling to their illusory political independence.

The royal fortress is still there, proudly intact. False prophets are predicting the imminent return of the exiles (Jeremiah 28) and spread such false hope throughout the *golah*. Their evil enticements reach deep into the land of exile, where they find fertile soil. They want to join hands from afar with their brothers in the homeland. Meanwhile, Jeremiah has not ceased to send his poignant messages of warning and admonition to the exiles (Jeremiah 29), and he, too, spoke to unlistening ears. Ezekiel is living right there, in the midst of the exiles; even he has been forced to remain silent. But the tablet on which he has traced the image of Jerusalem, their home, speaks louder than words and whoever enters the Prophet's home is overcome by what he sees.

**Verses 4-8.** The Prophet is lying in chains before the image of the besieged city. He must lie on his left side for 390 days to symbolize the burden placed upon him by the 390-year history of sin in the Northern Kingdom (Rashi: north, represented by the left, south by the right side) that no longer exists. The sins of the Northern Kingdom helped pave the way for the ultimate destruction of Jerusalem. After that, Ezekiel must lie, paralyzed, on his right side for 40 days to symbolize the 40-year history of sin in the southern Kingdom of Judah. Judah's refusal to learn its lesson from the downfall of the Northern Kingdom made the destruction of Jerusalem inevitable.

The guilt of this period of sin and shame weighs heavily upon the Prophet's conscience; it is enough to paralyze him. These are the shackles that his own people have placed upon him (Chapter 3, Verse 25), making it impossible for him to take any action that might have saved the remnant of his people.

So the Prophet must lie in chains, his arm symbolically stretched out (see Isaiah 52,10) to destroy Jerusalem; וּבָאָה עַלְיהָ (Verse 7). His paralysis bears a prophetic message.

**Verse 5.** The commentators cannot agree on the historical dating of this

days, three hundred and ninety days; thus shall you bear the sin of the house of Israel.

6. And when you have completed these, then lie down upon your right side and bear the sin of the house of Judah for forty days; one day each for every year have I designated it for you.

7. But you turn your face toward the siege of Yerushalayim; let your arm be uncovered, and thus shall you prophesy against it.

8. Behold, I have placed ropes upon you; you will not be able to turn from one side to the other, until you have completed the days of your siege.

9. And take yourself wheat and barley, beans and lentils, millet and spelt, and put them into one vessel and prepare them for yourself as bread for the number of

וַתִּשְׁעַם יּוֹם וַנְשַׁאֲתָן עַזְנֵ בֵּית־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

וְכָלַת אֶת־אֱלֹהָה וְשַׁבְּתָ עַל־  
צְדֻקָּה הַוְיכָנוּ שְׁנִית וַנְשַׁאֲתָן אֶת־  
עַזְנֵ בֵּית־יְהוָה אֶרְבָּעִים יוֹם וָיּוֹם  
לְשָׁנָה יוֹם לְשָׁנָה נְמַתְּיוֹ לְהָ:

וְאֶל־מִצּוֹר יְרוּשָׁלָם תְּכִין פְּנֵיךְ  
וּוּרְעַק חַשּׁוֹפָה וַנְבַּאֲתָן עַלְיהָ:

וְהַעֲבֹד גְּמַתְּתֵי עַלְיָךְ עַכְבּוֹתִים לֹא־  
תַּהֲפֹך מִצְרָר אֶל־צְדֻקָּה עַד־כְּלֹתוֹ  
יְמֵי מִצּוֹר:

וְאַתָּה קְחַלֵּךְ חַפְּיוֹן וְשַׁעֲרִים  
וּפּוֹל וְצְרָשִׁים וּלְחָן וּכְסָמִים  
וְגַתְתָּה אֹתָם בְּכָלֵ אֶחָד  
עֲשִׂישִׁת אֹתָם לְךָ לְלַחַם מִסְפָּר  
יְמֵינֵךְ.

period. "Seder Olam and subsequently Rashi, on the basis of the responsa of Rabbi Joseph, head of the Talmudic academy of Pumbeditha, both demonstrate that these 390 days correspond to the number of years for which the people had to atone for their transgressions during the period of the Judges under the pressure of Kushan, Eglon, Sisera, etc. That period, plus the forty years that passed from Michah until the capture of the Ark of the Covenant under Eli, totals 151 years. To these is added the 239-year period of the reign of the kings of the Kingdom of Israel until the year that the kingdom was destroyed by Sanherib. This reckoning yields a total of 390 years. The forty years of the Kingdom of Judah are to correspond to the period during which that kingdom defected from God under Menasseh, Amon and Jehoiakim following the fall of the Kingdom of Israel" (*Collected Writings*, Volume III, p. 43).

*Verse 6.* לְשָׁנָה: This method of simply using a superficial similarity or sequence of numbers is frequently used in Scripture to bring something to mind, or to recall something. (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 14, 34).

*Verse 9.* From a mixture of grains he has gathered at random, Ezekiel must

days on which you will lie upon your side: for three hundred and ninety days shall you eat it.

**10.** And your food which you eat shall be by weight: twenty shekels for a day, from one time of day until the (same) time the (next) day shall you eat it.

**11.** And you shall drink water by measure: one-sixth of a *hin* from one time of day until the (same) time the (next) day shall you drink it.

**12.** And you shall eat it (in the shape of) barley cake, and upon the dung of human excrement you shall bake it before their eyes.

**13.** God said: Thus will the sons of Israel eat their bread, unclean,

הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר־אָתָה | שׁוֹכֵב עַל־  
אֶרְךָ שְׁלֹשִׁים־מְאוֹת וּתְשׁׁוּעִים יוֹם  
תַּאֲכִלָּנוּ:

<sup>10</sup> וּמְאַכְלָךְ אֲשֶׁר תַּאֲכִלָּנוּ  
בְּמַשְׁקָול עֲשָׂרִים שָׁקֵל לִיּוֹם מְעֻנָּת  
עֲרֵזָת הַאֲכִלָּנוּ:

וּ. זֹמְםִים בְּקַשְׁוָרָה תְּשַׁקְּה שְׁשִׁית  
הַקִּין מִעֵת עֲרֵזָת תְּשַׁקְּה:

<sup>12</sup>. וְעַנְתָּ שְׁעָרִים תַּאֲכִלָּנוּ וְחַיָּה  
בְּגַלְלֵי צָאת הָאָרֶם תְּעַנְגָּה  
לְעִינֵיכֶם: ס

<sup>13</sup>. וְיַאֲכֵר יְהוָה בָּכָה וַיְאַכְלֵ בְּגַיִ

prepare the bread that is to serve as his meager nourishment for a period of 390 days (Verse 5). But what about the 40 days that follow? (see Verse 17).

*Verse 10–11.* His daily nourishment is to consist of scanty rations of bread and water, painstakingly weighed out according to God's directions. This suggests the horrors of a protracted siege during which an oppressed populace will have to struggle against the constant specter of starvation. However, the explanation for this provision is not given until Verse 16.—מֵעֵת שֶׁ עַד—the most difficult command of all. This ration must last him for twenty-four hours.

*Verse 12.* **זָעַן שְׁעָרִים תַּאֲכִלָּנוּ:** What is more, this pitiful bread ration must be prepared in a manner that is utterly degrading, beneath human dignity. (The bread is to be prepared in shapeless loaves, in the manner of barley bread; see *עִירובין* *טט*). But even worse (as emphasized by the word *חַיָּה*) it was to be baked over dried-out human excrement. *לְל*—dung; *אָהָה*—excrement. But when we read *שָׁמַח*, ordering us to preserve the *קדשָׁה* of our camp (Deut. 23, 13 ff), then we understand how truly painful these particular instructions for the preparation of the bread must have been to Ezekiel. Being forced to subsist on meager nourishment is certainly difficult. But the thought that this bread should also lack the basic character of human moral dignity leaves Ezekiel profoundly disheartened.

*Verse 13.* That is why, before explaining the instructions given earlier on,

among the nations to whom I will expel them.

**ישראל את-לחם טמא בגוים  
אשר אידחים שם:**

**14.** But I said: O my Lord, God,  
Who envelops His loving kindness  
in justice, behold, my soul  
has never defiled itself; since my  
childhood until today I have not  
eaten anything that perished of it-  
self or was torn; never has prohib-  
ited meat come into my mouth!

14. ואמר אלה אַרְנֵי יָדוֹה הַנֶּה  
גַּפְשִׁי לֹא סְפִמָּאָה וְנַכְלָה וּסְרָפָה  
לְאַדְאַלְתֵּי סְגֻעָרִי וְעַדְעָתָה  
לְאַדְאָבָא בְּפִי בָּשָׂר פְּגָלָס

**15.** Then He said to me: Behold,  
I have assigned for you the dung

15. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים לְאָדָם נָתַתִּי  
לְךָ אֶת-צְפָנָיו הַבָּקָר פָּתַח  
צְפָנָיו בָּרוּךְ

the Word of God reveals the profound meaning of the instruction contained in Verse 12. It is intended to direct our thoughts toward the scattered remnants of the Jewish people who, estranged from their calling, must eat the bread of uncleanness in exile, בְּאַשְׁר סָמֵךְ יְמִיכָּלָה, so Hosea laments (Hosea 9,3) as he reflects on the downfall of the Northern Kingdom whose burden of guilt Ezekiel had to bear for a period of 390 days.

*Verse 14.* An agonizing sigh rises from the very depths of Ezekiel's soul. He is ready to make any sacrifice that God, his Master, may demand of him. But these instructions are truly difficult to follow. All his life he has labored to achieve קדש. He had taken infinite pains to erase from his mind anything that might defile his soul—נשׁך לא טומאה—(וְנִשְׁאַבֵּן לְאַתָּה לִידֵינוּ) סומכת בלביה.

**תגלה שדחה ונר**: In his choice of nourishment he scrupulously has avoided even food that only gave the appearance of violating the Law of God (שלא אכלתי בשיד שטחנות).

וְלֹא בָּא כַּפֵּר וּנְאָמַר: And just as the flesh of a sacrificial animal is rendered **טָלֵל** (Leviticus 7,18) by the mere intent to partake of it outside the limits of time and place set by the Law, so Ezekiel refused to eat any meat that first required a halachic ruling from an expert because of the mere possibility that it might be condemned as forbidden (**טָהָרָה שׁוֹדֶה כִּי טָהָר**). The interpretation of this verse is based on **תְּלִין לְלִין**. No other interpretation is possible. These concepts must be taken in their figurative meaning (see Rashi).

**Verse 15.** The Divine command uses a softer language and modifies one requirement. **תְּמִימָה** is the dung of animals as distinct from that of humans. In the midst of a *golah* in which there is no lack of amenities the Prophet must still prepare his scanty bread rations under degrading conditions. (It has to be done **תְּמִימָה**, Verse 12.) His lips quiver in distress, but he remains silent. He

of cattle instead of human excrement; prepare your food upon it.

**16.** And He said to me: Son of mankind, behold, I will break the staff of bread in Yerushalayim; they shall eat bread by weight and with anxiety, and they will drink water by measure and in utter despair.

17. So that bread and water will be wholly lacking for them, and they, the one and the other, will wither and waste away in their sin.

**גָּלַלְתִּי הָאָרֶם וְעָשִׂית אֶת־לְחֵמָקָעָם:**

16. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים בָּרוּךְ הוּא נֵר  
מִפְתָּח־לְחֵם בִּירוּשָׁלָם וְאֶכְלֵל־לְחֵם  
בְּמִשְׁקָל וּבְרָאָנָה וּמִים בְּמִשְׂוָרָה  
וּבְשִׁמְכוֹן יִשְׁתַּחַז

למען יחסרו לחם ומים ונשטו  
איש ואחיו ונמקו בעונם: פ

is not yet ready to speak. When God will let him know that the time is ripe for him to speak, words of exhortation will pour forth from his lips, admonishing his people to lead lives of **סנהדרה**. He will then elevate his people, who are beset with **טומאה**, to the pure and lofty level of human dignity, bringing them to the state of perfect **סנהדרה** (See Chapter 36).

*Verse 16.* But for the moment, his mission is to use symbols, the most eloquent language of all, for the purpose of conveying to his people the message that the horrors of a siege, as predicted in the **מִזְבֵּחַ** (Leviticus 26,25), are about to descend upon the hapless city of Jerusalem. In **בָּשָׂקֶל וּבָרָאָגָה**: His scanty bread ration is salted with sorrow and **וְכַטְמֹן**, every drop of water he drinks is tainted with the specter of death from thirst.

*Verse 17.* The privation amidst which a desperate garrison must do battle against the enemy reaches its climax in the final days of the siege, when the city's supplies of bread and water are gone. Here we have the explanation for the fact that the directions regarding Ezekiel's scanty food rations are made applicable only to 390 days and not also to the 40 days that followed. The predictions of the **נַגֲמָה בְּעָמָם** (Levit. 26,39) will come true in their entirety.

Who would not be stirred to the very depths of his heart by the thought of our Prophet appealing to the conscience of his people for days on end in this desperate state of body and mind? He did it only for his people. Indeed, what would he *not* have done for them? Only in this manner could he gradually restore them to a state of purity or at least make them aware of what was expected of them. As the Sages so aptly comment: **הקב"ה מיסד את יוזקאל כרוי** (סנהדרין יט).

**Chap. 5.** 1. And you, son of mankind, take yourself a sharp sword, as a barber's razor shall you take it for yourself, and pass it over your head and your beard; and then you shall take for yourself a weighing scale and divide them.

ה וְאַתָּה בָּנֶיךָ רֹאשׁ קָחֵל וְ  
תִּרְבֶּב חֲדָה תִּעֲרֶר הַגְּלִבִּים תִּקְהַנֶּה  
לְךָ וְהַשְׁבָּרֶת עַל־רַאשְׁךָ וְעַל־  
זָנָב וְלַקְחֶת לְךָ מְאוֹנִי מִשְׁקָל  
וְחַלְקָתָם:

**Chapter 5.** The Prophet still has much more to say to his people in the *golah*. As the siege of Jerusalem nears its end (Verse 2) he arises and takes up a sword. In his hands this sword becomes a razor, sharp and awesome. He points it at his own head. He uses truly frightening language to impress his people. He has starved and gone through terrible sufferings, but though his tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth (Chapter 3, Verse 26), he must go on uttering his warnings with ever-growing urgency. His actions should speak for themselves and will demonstrate their poignant lesson. True, God's words will explain these symbolic actions (Verse 12) as a part of the narrative rather than in an interpretative vein. There is no need for explanations. (This is obviously the reason why no further explanations are given for other symbolic acts described in Verses 3 and 4.) Thus, too, we find interspersed in the instructions given to the Prophet, words that speak in terms of the catastrophes that are about to strike his people: *טָמֵן חָאָשׁ אֶל כָּל* (*Verse 2*) and *חוּרָב אַרְיךָ אַחֲרֵיכֶם* (*Verse 4*); see commentaries, *ibid*.

**Verse 1.** Ezekiel uses the sword to cut off the hair of his head and his beard. Note that this is the only instance in Scripture where the term נִלְבֵּב is used to refer to a barber's tool. See *העברת חָדָה* in connection with the *טהורה* (Leviticus 14,8) and in connection with the Levites (Numbers 8,7). "We believe we are not mistaken if we view the hair that covers the human body as performing a protective function, reducing the impact of the environment on the body, thus serving as an insulating agent. To denude the body of all its hair would mean to expose the body to the influences of its environment. Such an act would therefore serve to stir high resolves to strip oneself of the egotism which isolates him from his fellow man . . . , see Isaiah 7,20 where the power of the Assyrian empire is described as a 'razor in God's employ' and the removal of the elements that have protected the body of the Jewish nation heretofore is described in metaphoric terms as the shearing off of all its hair" (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 14,9).

The siege is drawing to a close. It is destroying the elements that formerly served to protect the body of the Jewish nation but at the same time these same elements made it possible for that nation to persist in its "misplaced egotism" and to isolate itself from every godly influence.

2. One-third you shall burn in fire in the midst of the city, when the days of the siege come to an end; and one-third you shall take and strike it with the sword all around; and one-third you shall scatter to the wind—and I will draw the sword behind them.

3. From there you shall take a numbered few and gather them together in the corners of your garment.

4. And from them again you shall take and throw them into the fire and burn them in fire, (for) from it fire will go forth to all the house of Israel.

ב. שלשות בָּאֹר תְּבִעֵר בַּתּוֹךְ  
הַשִּׁיר כְּמַלְאָת יְמִינֵי הַפְּצִיר וְלִקְחָתָ  
אֶת־הַשְּׁלִשִׁית פְּנֵיה בְּתַחַב  
סְכִיבּוֹתֶיה וְהַשְּׁלִשִׁית תֹּוֹרָה לְרוֹצֶ  
וְחַרְבָּ אֲרִיךְ אַחֲרֵיכֶם:

ג. וְלִקְחָתָ מִשְׁם מַעַט בְּמַסְפֵּר  
וְצִרְתָּ אֹתָם בְּכָנְפֵיכֶךָ:

ד. וּמְהָם עֹור תְּקֵח וְהַשְּׁלִכָּתָ  
אֹתָם אֶל־תּוֹךְ הַאֲשֶׁר־שָׂרֶךְ אֶת־  
בָּאֵשׁ מִפְנֵיו תְּצַא־אֵשׁ אֶל־כָּל־  
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**מְאוֹן משקל**: He then places the hair on a scale, symbolically dividing it and consigning it to its sad fate. The fate of those that will fall victim to the pestilence, to the sword or to exile will not be determined in a haphazard fashion. The scales will be held in God's own hands (see Isaiah 40,12).

**Verse 2.** בְּחֻקֵּק הַעַיר, see Chapter 4. Verse 1. He will burn one third of the hair within the city that lies spread out before him. should probably be taken as more than just a play on words. In contrast to אֲשֶׁר (Verse 4), אֹר is "that stimulating element which awakens all the energies of nature so that they may unfold; it is related to עֹור, 'to awaken,' to become 'receptive to outside stimuli.' Hence also the skin is the main sensory organ" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1,3). On the face of it, the fire sent by God appears to be a destructive force, but in reality it seeks to stimulate new life, to make the body of the Jewish nation receptive to God's guidance. העברת עור.

One third will fall to the sword, another third will be scattered, and in the midst of this symbolic instruction we are told: וְחַרְבָּ אֲרִיךְ אַחֲרֵיכֶם. For we all will come to realize that the Divine חוכמה (Leviticus 26,33) is about to become a terrifying reality.

**Verse 3.** Only a very few will be permitted to take shelter under God's protection.

**Verse 4.** Would that they allowed themselves to be saved! Alas for those who refuse God's protection, thinking in their folly that they can save themselves without the help of God. It recalls the fate of the unfortunates who, in defiance

5. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: This Yerushalayim, in the midst of the nations have I placed her, with countries round about her.

6. But she turned My statutes into wicked caprice, more so than the [other] nations, and My laws more than the countries that surround her, for My ordinances they scorned and in My statutes they did not walk.

ו. כִּי אָמַר אֶלְעָנָי יְהוָה זֶאת  
יְרוּשָׁלָם בְּתוֹךְ הַגּוֹיִם שְׁמַתְּתָּה  
וּסְכִיבּוֹתָה אֶרְצֹות:

ו. וַתִּמְرָא תְּמִשְׁפֵּט לְרֹשְׁעָה מָן  
הַגּוֹיִם וְאֶת־חֲקֹתִי סְוִוָּה אֶרְצֹות  
אֲשֶׁר סְכִיבּוֹתָה בַּמְשֻׁפֵּט  
סְאָסָו וְחַקּוֹתִי לְאַדְלָכָו בָּהֶם: ס

of Jeremiah's warning, turned to Egypt for protection (see Malbim). But is not Ezekiel's drastic symbolic act also meant to address his own *golah*?

**שְׁרָמָת אָוָם בָּאָש:** They will become victims of an all-consuming fire (as distinct from *אָוָר*; see our commentary, Verse 2). What fools they are! No matter where they may go, they cannot escape the fire of God.

The siege of Jerusalem is over and the catastrophe has come. Its lesson has reached the *golah*. The Prophet's silent symbolic acts speak with frightening clarity. Perhaps there will yet come a time when the Prophet will be able to speak to his people, perhaps in words such as those in the following verses.

**Verse 5.** A terrible fate has befallen Jerusalem. It could have been avoided if only Jerusalem had remained mindful of its unique destiny. In the midst of the nations, in the heartland of the world, it was to be a timeless monument (*ציון*) of man's true destiny and to the lasting good that it could bring to mankind (*ירשלם*). The hopes expressed in identical terms by Isaiah (2,2) and by Michah (4,1) for the end of days could already have been realized: *הַיִה בָּאוֹרֶת הַיּוֹם נִכְן יְהוָה תְּרִיבָה בְּרִאשׁ הַוּרִים וְנִשְׁאָמְבָּעוֹת וְתִדְרֹו אֶלְיוֹן כָּל הַגּוֹיִם* "Jerusalem on the summit of mountains, borne by hills, and nations streaming toward her . . ."

**Verse 6.** But instead of permitting the Word of God, the *תְּקוּנה* and the *מְשֻׁפֵּטים*, to govern their individual and national lives, they looked down on God's Law with indifference and disdain, "trading it in" (*מְרָא*, "exchange") for a life of *רַשְׂעָה*, of self-indulgence and dissipation (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 9,4). They could have taken a lesson from the fate of the other nations. It is to these people that Jeremiah's reproachful words are addressed: *הַהִימְדֵד נִי אֶלְהָם וּבוֹ* (Jeremiah 2, 11). See how persistently other nations cling to their heritage, their traditions, even though they are only sham and illusion!

7. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Since you are a surging, disordered mass, even more so than the nations that surround you—in My statutes you did not walk, My ordinances you did not fulfill, and you did not even act in the way of the nations that surround you;

8. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice, I, too, will turn against you and carry out judgments in your midst before the eyes of the nations.

9. And I will do to you that which I have never done and the like of which I will never do again—according to your abominations.

10. Therefore, fathers will eat children in your midst, and children will eat their fathers—I will carry out judgments against you and scatter your whole remnant to all the winds.

ו. **לֹכֶן בְּהַאֲמֵר אָרְנִי יְהוָה יְעַן הַמְּנֻכָּם מִן-הַגּוֹנוֹם אֲשֶׁר סְכִיבּוֹתֵיכֶם בְּחִקּוֹתִי לֹא הַלְכָתֶם וְאֶת-מְשֻׁפְטֵי הַגּוֹנוֹם אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתֶם וְכָמְשֻׁפְטֵי הַגּוֹנוֹם אֲשֶׁר סְכִיבּוֹתֵיכֶם לֹא עֲשִׂיתֶם:** ס

ו. **לֹכֶן כִּי אָמַר אָרְנִי יְהוָה הָנָגִן עַלְיוֹד גָּסְדָּאָנִי וְעַשְׂיוֹתִי בְּתוֹךְ מְשֻׁפְטִים לְעֵינֵי הַגּוֹנוֹם:**

ו. **וְעַשְׂיוֹתִי בָּדַק אֶת אֲשֶׁר לֹא עֲשִׂיתֶם וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר-לְאָנָּה קָמָהוּ עַד יָצַן בְּלִת-תּוּבָתִיךְ:** ס

ו. **לֹכֶן אֲבֹתֶת יוֹאכִילוּ בְּנֵים בְּתוֹךְ וּבְנִים יוֹאכִילוּ אֲבֹתֵם וְעַשְׂיוֹתִי בָּרֶ שְׁפָטִים וּוֹרִיתִי אֶת-בְּלֶ-שָׁאָרִיתֶךָ לְכָל-רוֹחַ:** ס

**Verse 7.** *הַמְּנֻכָּם* is "a disorganized, surging crowd whose movements have neither direction nor purpose" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 17,5). Israel was a "confused mass," more than any of the other nations, when in fact it should have been the *אָבוֹת* *הָאָהָרָן*. It should never have forgotten the Abrahamite covenant under which it had been destined to become *בָּרִים*. That is why all the disasters introduced by the word *לֹכֶן*—"therefore"—in the verses that follow will now strike the people of Israel in rapid succession.

**Verses 8–9.** Therefore, too, no disaster from the history of the other nations can be compared to the calamities that will now befall Israel. But in these very catastrophes the Prophet perceives God as *אָרְנִי אֱלֹקִים*.

**Verse 10.** *וְגַרְבָּנָת וְגַרְבָּנָת*: These words recall the dire predictions in Leviticus 26,29 (see *חֲרֵב ibid.*).

11. Therefore, as surely as I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice, because you have defiled My Sanctuary with all your disgusting acts and abominations. I also will remove (that which protects you), and My eye will not spare, nor will I have compassion.

12. One third of you shall die from the plague and waste away with famine in your midst; the (other) third shall fall by the sword round about you and the (final) third I will scatter to all the winds, and I will draw the sword behind them.

13. And yet My anger will spend itself and I will calm My fury when it is turned against them—so that I can move Myself to a change of heart. Let them know that I have spoken as ¶

11. אך כוונתני נאש ארכני  
עלוה אסלא עזע אט-מקרעשי  
טפאת בכל-ש��וץיך ובכל-  
תוּבְתָּךְ וַגֵּסֶדֶן אֲגַרְעַ לֹא-  
תְּחַסֵּעַ עִינֵּי וַגֵּסֶדֶן לֹא אַחֲמְלָל:

12. שלישית בפרק ימותו בגראע  
בקלו בתוכך והשלישי בחרב  
ופלו סכיבותיך ומהלישות לכל-  
רשות אורה וחרב אליך אפרהימ:

13. וכלה אשׁוּי וגנחותי חפטיך בם  
והנחתמי נירשו כיראני יהונה

*Verse 11.* Israel shows no understanding for the Sanctuary of the Lord. In cold disdain, the people of Israel turn the sacred abode of God into a place of mockery.

ונם אני—And that is why God, too, will show them no mercy now.

שׂקץ when used with reference to idols denotes idolatry as the extreme contrast to our own spiritual and moral ideals (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 11,10).

For the meaning of תְּצֻבָּה, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 43,32.

The term אַגְרָע was chosen here possibly because it is used elsewhere in Scripture (see Isaiah 15,2 and Jeremiah 48,37) to denote the removal of a beard (see Verse 1 of the present chapter). Other commentators associate אַגְרָע with צַדְקָה; i.e., "I will 'remove' My eye from . . ."

*Verse 13.* And yet God is only waiting for the moment when He will be able to let His wrath subside, for He is ready at all times to "alter His decision" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 5,29). He does not want to destroy His people. God reveals Himself to them in His quality of ¶ even through all

when I asserted My rights, when I let My anger spend itself against them.

**14.** But I will give you to desolation and to humiliation among the nations round about you, before the eyes of everyone that passes by.

**15.** And it shall be a humiliation and a slander, as an instruction and a desolation for the nations round about you. When I carry out the judgments against you in anger and in fury and in the reprimands given in fury, it is as *הִ* that I have spoken.

**16.** When I send forth against them the evil arrows of hunger,

רַבְרָתִי בְּקֹנְאָתִי בְּכָלּוּתִי חֲמָתִי  
בְּ:

וְאֶתְגָּרֵל חָרְבָּה וְלִחְרָפָה בְּנוֹתִים  
אֲשֶׁר סְכִיבּוֹתִיךְ לְעֵינֵי כָּלָעָזָר:

15. וְהִוָּתָה חָרְפָה וְגַרְופָה מָוֶסֶר  
וְקַמְשָׁפָה לְנָזִים אֲשֶׁר סְכִיבּוֹתִיךְ  
בְּאַשְׁוֹתִי בְּךָ שְׁפָטִים בְּאָפָר וּבְחַמְתִי  
וּבְתִּכְחֻתִתִ חָמָת אָנָי וּלְעוֹת דִּבְרָתִי

16. בְּשַׁלְחֵי אַתְּחַצֵּי הַרְעָב  
הַרְעָם בְּרַם אֲשֶׁר דָּיו לְמִשְׁחוֹת

the terrible sufferings that He must inflict upon them: *בְּקֹנְאָתִי*: He only asserts His right to the obedience which they have withheld from Him. Once the God-ordained period of suffering has come to an end, then, *וְיַדְעָו כִּי אַנְי הִ*, the people of Israel will realize that the merciful, educating hand of God was at work even in Israel's sorrow-laden *galuth* history.

*Verse 14–15.* But the nations, too, could have been expected to understand the cause of Israel's sufferings which were ordained by God and amidst which God, at the same time, never ceased to protect His people. The nations had seen Israel laid waste and humiliated (*Verse 14*). But they should not have interpreted this as a license to make Israel the object of their own abuse and unbridled slander. (*מוֹסֵר וּמִשְׁמָה לְנוֹרִיט* (see Malbim): Israel's pitiful situation should have opened the eyes of the nations and warned them of the Divine punishment that may strike them, too, at any time. They should perceive all the manifestations of God's wrath as *חַמְתָה חַמָתָה*, a disciplining action of Divine Providence that is not intended to destroy Israel but only to guide the people of Israel back to the one path that can lead them to true life—*דָּרוֹת חַיִם חַכְמָה*—(*Proverbs 6,23*).

*Verses 16–17.* Could it be anything else but the expression of God's eternal love (*הִ*) that speaks from the midst of Israel's unprecedented misery? It is with deep compassion that Ezekiel depicts the fate of his people in *galuth*, even

which (otherwise) could have caused ruin—which I am sending (supposedly) in order to destroy you—and increase more and more famine upon you and break the staff of bread for you;

17. And when I send forth against you famine and evil beasts that will rob you of your children, and the plague and blood will pass over you, and when I bring the sword upon you, it is as **ה'** that I have spoken!

**Chap. 6. 1.** Then the word of God came to me:

אֲשֶׁר־אָשַׁלְחُ אֹתָם לְשַׁחַתְכֶם  
וּרְעַב אָסֵף עַלְיכֶם וְשִׁבְרָתִי לְכֶם  
מִטְהָרָתְךָ:

וְשַׁלְחָתִי עַלְיכֶם רָעַב וְתִפְאָה  
רָעַה וְשִׁבְרָד וְנִכְרָה וְרַם מִצְבָּר־  
בָּגָד וְחַרְבָּא אֲקִיא עַלְיךָ אָנָי וְהַעֲלָה  
דְּבָרָתַי: פ

וְיַעֲשֵׂה דְּבָרַיו לְעוֹלָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָמֶר:

when he uses the ominous words of God's own (*Leviticus 26*) to describe it. He contemplates his languishing, wounded people sometimes at close range and then again from the vantage point of a great distance (hence the changes in the form of address from the third person plural—Verse 13—to the second person plural—Verse 16—and finally to the second person singular—Verse 17). He speaks of the hunger that rages in Israel's midst (note the appalling progression: first, the arrows of famine are aimed at them, then the hunger increases, and finally the "staff of life"—bread—has been broken over them). Yet all this misery is only one phase of Israel's sufferings. Verse 17 takes up the theme again and lists the other harbingers of death that ravage Israel without cease.

Famine alone would have been enough to put an end to Israel's existence. **אשר אלה לו למשחו:** Any other nation would have succumbed and yet, **אוֹתָם וּנוּ** it is the other nations that have prepared Israel's destruction. The nations should never have dared to interpret Israel's suffering as a sign that God Himself has rejected and abandoned His people. The entire history of Israel demonstrates instead the fulfillment of the Word of God. **הַיְיָ אֶכְלָה כְּלֹו חַמָּם** (*Deuteronomy 32,23*) "I will spend My arrows on them"—**בָּם** (*Ain K'laim*—**בָּם**) In the midst of all these sufferings, He will also give His people the strength to survive and overcome the long tribulations. The nations will witness these developments and ultimately acknowledge the greatness of Divine Providence: **אָנָי הָדָברִי**—"I, God, have spoken."

2. Son of mankind, turn your face toward the mountains of Israel and speak to them your prophetic word.

3. Say: Mountains of Israel, hear the word of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice. Thus has my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice, spoken to the mountains and to the hills, to the ravines and valleys: Behold, I will bring the sword upon you, and I will cause your high places to go under.

בָּנְדָרָם שִׁים פָּגַע אֶל־הָרִי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַנֶּבֶא אֲלֵיכֶם:

וְאֹמְרָתָ הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמָעוּ  
רְבָרְאַלְנִי יְהוָה כִּיהְאָמַר אָלְנִי  
יְהוָה לְהָרִים וְלִגְבָּעוֹת לְאָפִיקִים  
וְלִגְאֹות הַגְּנוּי אָנָּי סְכִיא עַלְיכֶם  
חֶרְבָּן אֶבְרָתִי בְּמַוְתִּיכֶם:

ולנאיות קרי.

**Chapter 6, Verses 2-3.** Ezekiel addresses his exiled people not with words but with symbolic acts. Where speech fails, the impact of terrifying events must convey the message. His tongue is paralyzed, but his actions convey a dire警告—Chapter 4, Verse 7). Now, at last, he begins to speak, but his thoughts linger on the distant hills of Israel. His message at this time is not directed to his people in *galut* but to mountains that cannot respond to his words. He does not need an audience now; historical developments have a powerful language of their own.

הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל: Far away in the distance, the “mountains of Israel” still rise proudly. But Ezekiel’s reference to them is not intended as a metaphor describing the people of Israel in its true greatness. For had this been so, Israel would have risen as a *חַד חַד* “the mountain of the Lord” (Psalms 24,3) from whose summit the truths symbolized by Zion would go forth to distant lands. But alas, the summits of the **הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל** are now covered with “idolatrous altars.”

The Prophet is addressing the **הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל** (Verse 2) and at the same time the “mountains and hills, the ravines and the valleys” (Verse 3); “it is upon you that I will bring the sword, and I will destroy your high places.” The people of Israel has identified itself with its natural environment; it has come to regard its mountains, its hills, its headwaters and its valleys as if they represented the nation itself. They believe that they can draw their strength from their homeland. The bond that once tied them to the Sanctuary of God has been broken. Zion’s sacred altar stands deserted; Israel prostrates itself before the altars of nature in abject worship. For **בְּמַיִם** see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 18,16 and 42,2.

4. And your altars shall become desolate and your sun-images shall be broken, and I will let your slain be cast down before your idols.

5. And I will place the corpses of the sons of Israel before their

וְנִשְׁמַׁוּ סֹבְכָה תִּכְבִּים וּנְשַׁבְּרוּ  
חֲמֻנֵיכֶם וְהַפְלַתִי חֲלֹלִיכֶם לִפְנֵי  
גָּלוּלִיכֶם:

וְנִתְתַּחַתִי אֶת־פְּנֵרִי בְּנֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי גָּלוּלִיכֶם וּרְוִיתִי

*Verse 4.* The Law of God bans from the midst of Israel, permitting an altar to be erected only in front of God's own Sanctuary. True, could be raised also with the intention of worshipping the One God, but the danger persisted that they might be used also for the worship of some deity of nature and that, eventually, "altars" (טובחות) would be erected for these deities to replace the altar belonging to the Sanctuary of the Law. All too often, have led to the erection of such places. The term נִמְזָה denotes the sacrificial 'high places' that could be dedicated to God but were in fact forbidden by His Law. The use of these for the worship of God contrary to His own Law served only to generate and nurture attitudes of self-serving caprice and callous indifference toward the Law of God, in contrast to the מִבֵּחַ in the טְרוּשׁ which represented absolute dedication to the Law. And that is why, side by side with the sacrificial 'high places' consecrated to the One God, there also were מִזְבְּחָתִים images devoted to sun-worship, and even גָּלוּלִים, the crudest term used in Scripture for heathen idols. גָּלוּל denotes excrement, that which the body eliminates as a foreign substance, as an unassimilable element. The use of the term גָּלוּל with reference to paganism implies that this idol-worship is so blatantly at variance with pure humanity that men should reject it as totally incompatible with human ideals. Where such practices are nurtured and promoted, they become a symptom of the most abject depravity" (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 26,30).

The בְּמֹת must be destroyed by the sword (Verse 3). Only then will the altars become desolate and the emblems of sun-worship will disappear forever. But lying before these shattered forces of nature, history will behold the dead of the Jewish people. The Jewish people will have to atone heavily for their fatal delusion.

*Verse 5.* In Verse 4 we were told: הַמְּפַלְתִּי חֲלֹלִיכֶם לְפִי גָּלוּלִיכֶם. This referred to the slain of the "mountains of Israel." Now that they have been slain, they become פְּנֵרִי בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, the remains of the sons of Israel. Only death can break the fatal alliance that bound Israel to the forces of nature. Hence וְתַחַתִי רְנוּי בְּנֵי is in the third person plural. This sentence is intended as a parenthetical note to the preceding verse which continues with חֲרִיצִי.

idols, and I will scatter your bones round about your altars.

**6.** In all your dwelling places the cities shall be ruined and the high places made desolate, so that your altars will lie in ruins and become desolate and broken, and your idols cease [to exist], your sun-images will be cut down and your works will dissolve into nothingness.

**7.** And when thus the slain falls in your midst, you will know that I am ה'.

**8.** And I will single you out, so that there shall remain of you also [some] that will escape from the

אַתְּ־עֲצָמוֹתֵיכֶם סִכְיּוֹת מִזְבְּחוֹתֵיכֶם:

6. בְּכָל מִזְבְּחוֹתֵיכֶם הַעֲרִים תִּחְרַבְנָה וְהַבָּמוֹת תִּישְׁמַנָּה לְמַעַן יְחֻרְבָּו וְיַאֲשִׁמוּ מִזְבְּחוֹתֵיכֶם וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ וְנִשְׁבְּתוּ גְּלֹלִיכֶם וְגְרָעִיכֶם חֲפֹנִיכֶם וְגְמָחוּ מִعְשָׂיכֶם:

7. וְגַפְלָל חָלֵל בְּתֹכְכֶם וְיַרְעַטָּם כִּי־ אָנָּי יְהֹוָה:

8. וְהַוְתַּרְתֵּי כְּהִיוֹת לְכֶם פְּלִיטִי

וְנַהֲרֵי אֶת פְּנֵיכֶם עַל סְנוּרֵי גְּלֹולִיכֶם (Leviticus 26,30). To this verse R. Hirsch comments: "An idol that has been smashed is like the corpse of an alien deity. As long as that idol remained intact and an object of worship, it symbolized the beliefs of its worshippers, and thus gained a significance far beyond the merit and the value of the material from which it was made. But once this idol has been smashed, the very fact that it could be destroyed demonstrates that it could never have possessed the divine powers attributed to it. Its symbolic value is gone, and all that remains of it is a piece of lifeless material." These thoughts are now developed further in the following passages. וְנַהֲרֵי אֶת סְנוּרֵי בָּנֵי שָׂרָאֵל: But then the גְּלֹולִים themselves have become dead bodies, as it were. This is explained in Verse 6.

*Verse 6.* When the cities lie waste and the נִמְתָּא lie buried beneath their ruins, the last hour has come also for all the deities of nature. לְטַעַן: there will be no more altars to glorify them; idolatry and sun worship will cease, מִתְּשַׁמֵּשׁ, for idols and pagan symbols have been exposed as worthless. They were only "the work of your hands." Only you, in your folly, attributed divine qualities to them, and now they have been destroyed, just like your cities.

*Verse 7.* There will be many corpses in your midst—not only dead human beings but also dead idols. They will make way for ה'.

*Verse 8.* Nevertheless, ה' has never been closer to you than at this moment when, according to all natural expectations, you should have been utterly destroyed.

sword among the nations, when you are scattered among the lands.

9. And those of you that escape among the nations where they will be carried captive will remember Me, Who was broken [with grief]; (they will remember) their faithless heart which has strayed from following Me, their eyes which follow their idols faithlessly; they will loathe themselves for the outrages which they committed in all their abominations.

10. And they will know that I,

חרב בנים בהזרותיכם  
בארצות:  
וַיִּכְרֹר פָּלֶטִיכֶם אֲתֶנוּ בְּנָוִים  
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבָּרְשָׁם אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבָּרְתִּי  
אֲתִילְכֶם הַזֹּנָה אֲשֶׁר־סְרֵךְ מָעֵלִי  
וְאֲתִעִינְתֶּם הַזֹּנּוֹת אַחֲרֵיכֶם גְּלוּלִיָּם  
וְגַנְקְטוּ בְּפָנֵיכֶם אַל־הַרְעָוֹת אֲשֶׁר  
עָשָׂו לְכָל תֹּעֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

וְיַדְעֻוּ כִּי־אָנִי וְהַזָּה לֹא אֶלְ-

as in Deuteronomy 30,9. The hour of your death will mark your rebirth and the beginning of a new future for you. This renascence will dawn for you when you will be scattered in the lands of your exile, far from your homeland.

**מִשְׁבָּרְתִּיכֶם** (passive infinitive plural, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 139,21). Your dispersion is not the result of blind circumstance but willed by Me, God says; it is My work (see Psalms 36,19).

Verse 9. In exile, they will remember Me. The great hour of truth will be upon them. The objects of the verb are: **את לכם** and **אתוּ**. (According to Malbim **אשר נִשְׁבָּרְתִּי** refers to **אתוּ**). They will remember Me, with Whom they had "broken" for the sake of their outrageous idolatry. (This verse employs the term used earlier in this chapter with regard to **גְּלוּלִים**). Now that these abominations have been broken forever (Verse 6), God will resume His place in the lives of the people. Much do they remember now. The **חוֹתָה** had warned them: **ולא חִתְרֹו אֶת־דְּבָרֵיכֶם אֲחֶרְיוּ עִנְיָנִים אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם וְנִמְאָתְרִים** They have paid a heavy price for their defection. The awareness of their guilt fills them with mortification and humiliation. **תִּקְשׁוּ**, passive form of **קַשְׁטָה**—“reject.”

Stripped of all self-deception, they find themselves looking down a precipice. If there can be anything worse than **חוֹתָה**, they will have committed them. Their **חוֹתָבוֹת** have led them to unspeakable outrages. If a “people of God” takes the path of **חוֹתָה**, there is no limit to the **רוּחוֹת** that will result. Their **רוּחוֹת** were **חוֹתָבוֹת** (Verse 11 and Chapter 8, Verse 9).

Verse 10. Once they have become thoroughly ashamed of their sins they will acknowledge God’s justice. The **רוּחה** that He had inflicted upon them had

ה, have not said in vain that I would inflict this evil upon them.

**11.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Strike with your hand, stamp with your foot and say woe concerning the evil abominations of the house of Israel that is to fall by the sword, by famine and by the plague.

**12.** He that is far off shall die by the plague; he that is near shall fall by the sword and he that remains behind and is besieged shall die by famine—but I shall put an end to My anger against them.

**13.** And you will know that I am ה when their slain will lie among their idols round about their altars, on every high hill, on all the mountaintops, under every verdant

חַנֵּם רְבָרְתִּי לְעַשׂוֹת לָהֶם הַרְעָה  
הַזֹּאת: פ

כִּי־הָרְאָמֵר אֲלֹנִי וְהָהָה הַפָּה  
בְּכֶפֶךְ וּרְקָע בְּרִנְלָךְ וְאַמְדִר־אָח אַל  
כָּל־תְּנוּבֹת רְעֻות בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֲשֶׁר בְּתַחַב בְּרָעָב וּבְקָרָב וּפָלָי

**12.** תְּרַחּוֹק בְּרַכְדִּים יְמוֹת וְהַקְרָוב  
בְּחַרְבִּים יְפָלִל וְהַגְשָׁאֵל וְהַגְּזָרֵר  
בְּרָעָב יְמוֹת וְכָלִיטִי חַמְתִּי בָּם:

**13.** וַיַּרְעַתָּם כִּירָאָנִי וְהָהָה בְּהִנּוּתָה  
חִילְיָהָם בְּתוֹךְ גָּלְלִיָּהָם סְכִיבּוֹת  
סְבוּבּוֹתָהָם אֶל כָּל־גְּבֻעָה דְּקָה  
בְּכָל־רָאשֵׁי הַהֲרָם וּמִתְחַת כָּל־

not come to them without purpose. It is to this that the nation will owe its new, chastened life.

*Verse 11.* אמר אֵת: A lament rises from the very depths of the Prophet's heart as he contemplates the terrible fate that is about to befall his people. However, the expressions of pain and indignation (הכה בכף וגוי) could also be interpreted as expressions of gratification (see Chapter 25, Verse 6). It would not seem far-fetched to interpret the passage in the following manner: וַיַּדְעַו כִּי אַנְיָה לֹא אָלַת וְנוּ (Verse 10): Only a catastrophe could save God's people now. It is the will of God to reawaken this people to renewed life. Even as his lips open to utter a cry of anguish, the Prophet is heartened at the thought of a new life rising out of ruins.

*Verse 12.* No one can escape God's punishment. However, it is His hope to be able to lay aside His anger—וכלייחי המתים בס, see Chapter 5, Verse 13.

*Verse 13.* Once again (see Verse 3) our eyes behold the riches of nature: lush vegetation—*צְמַח*—, oak trees covered with thick foliage, and hills and mountains. But alas, we also see the smoke, the *מַרְאָה נָמָרָה*, "expression of compliance" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 8,21), rising from the smoldering altars dedicated to *גָלְלִיָּה*. Now the worshippers lie dead, slain in the midst of

tree, under every leafy oak, the place where they offer an expression of compliance to all their idols.

14. Upon them shall I stretch My hand, [while] I will give the land to desolation and dread, from the wilderness until Diblah, wherever they may dwell—and they will know that I am ה.

**Chap. 7. 1.** The word of God came to me:

עַזְרָעֵנוּ וַתֵּחֶת בְּלִדְאָלָה עֲבֹתָה  
סְקוּם אֲשֶׁר גַּתְנוּ שָׁם רִיחַ נִיחַח  
לְכָל גָּלוּלָהֶם:

וְגַטְתִּיתִי אֲתִידָרוּ עַלְיוֹתָם  
וַתֵּחֶתְּנִי אֲתִידָהָרָץ שְׂמַחָה  
וַיִּשְׁפַּתְּה פְּמַרְכָּר דְּכַלְתָּה בְּכָל  
מוֹשְׁבּוֹתֵיהֶם וַיַּרְאֻשׁוּ כִּירָאַנִּי וְלֹהֶה:

ז. וְיַיְהֵי רְכַדְיוֹלָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָמָר:

their own idols beside their altars. But even in the silence of death we can discern the stirrings of new life: *חַדְפָּתָם כִּי אֲנִי ה*.

*Verse 14.* The bright scene of radiant nature, too, has vanished. At a signal from the hand of God, it has been replaced by horror and desolation from the wilderness (in the south) to דְבַלָּה (perhaps דְבַלָּה is identical with רְבַלָּה in the north, where Nebuchadnezzar had his headquarters before the siege of Jerusalem and where the sons of Zedekiah were slaughtered after the king was blinded and carried off in chains; see Jeremiah 52,8–11). But out of these ruins new life will emerge: *חַדְעָוּ כִּי אֲנִי ה*. These words express God's eternal love which, in whatever form, even if it is clothed in stern judgement, seeks at all times to educate His people toward a future of redemption and peace (*דְבַר אֱלֹקִים*, Verse 3).

**Chapter 7, Verse 1.** This chapter is the continuation of Chapter 6. Ezekiel contemplates the imminent catastrophe of the Jewish people, the day of its despair and total ruin, the final days of a history laden with guilt. Darkness and unparalleled horrors are about to descend; the cries of a mortally wounded nation are drowned out by the jubilant sounds of a triumphant foe. We read the introductory passage that describes this macabre scene: "Son of mankind, thus has God spoken, He Who maintains His loving kindness even when He metes out stern justice. . ." And then we understand that it is God Who, in His eternal love, has caused night to descend upon His people, but at the same time has already appointed a messenger to help Him banish the dark shadows. Whenever God speaks in His quality of ה and addresses His words to the harbinger of a new, pure future for all mankind, a future meant to help man fulfill his true mission on earth, a bright new morning of hope will dawn even in the darkest night.

2. And you, son of mankind, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who preserves His loving kindness even when He executes justice: When the end has overtaken the soil of Israel, the end will come also for the four corners of the earth.

3. Now the end comes upon you; I will send forth My anger against you, and I will judge you according to your ways and call you to account for all your abominations.

4. My eye will not spare you, and I will not show pity; rather, I will call you to account for your ways, and your abominations shall remain in your midst, and you will recognize that I am **אֵלֶיךָ**.

2. וְנַתַּחַת בָּרוּאָלָם כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים  
יְהוָה לְאַרְכָּת יִשְׂרָאֵל קָצְבָּא  
**הַקָּצֵן עַל־אָרְכָּת בְּנוֹפּוֹת הָאָרֶץ:**

3. עַתָּה הַקָּצֵן עַלְיךָ וְשִׁלְחוּתִי אֲפִי  
בָּךְ וְשִׁפְטָתוֹתִיךְ בְּרַכְבִּיךְ וְגַתְתִּיךְ  
**עַלְיךָ אַתְּ בְּלִת־תְּעֻכּוֹתִיךְ:**

4. וְלֹא־תַּחֲטוּ עַינֵּי עַלְיךָ וְלֹא  
אָחַטְמֹל כִּי דְּרַכְבִּיךְ עַלְגָּדָל  
אַפְּנֵן וְתְּעוּכּוֹתְךָ בְּתוֹכָךְ פְּתַחְיִין  
**(וְרֹעֵתָם כִּי־אָנִי וְלֹהֶה: פ**

**הַרְכֵּבָן קָרֵי.**

*Verse 2.* The time has come for a voice from on high to address itself to the soil of Israel, proclaiming: This far and no further (**קָצֵן**); and so the bond is broken that tied the “soil of man” (**אָדָמָה**) to the “ideal man of purity” (**אָדָם**—see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1, 26). For the Jewish soil will tolerate only men of purity (represented by the Prophet as **בֶן אָדָם**); it will reject any populace that has become morally corrupt. While this principle is applicable particularly to the soil of Israel, it holds good also for “the four corners of the earth.” For whatever happens to Israel will have wide repercussions. Ezekiel, like Isaiah and Jeremiah, has raised his lament over the history not only of Israel but of all the nations of the world (Chapter 25 ff.).

*Verse 3. קָצֵן:* God begins with Israel. Israel is the first target of God’s fiery wrath. The whole world may have strayed from God but Israel should never have permitted itself to sink so low.

**תֹּאֵל תְּהַנֵּן שְׁלֵךְ וְסֵךְ נְהַנֵּן** (see Jonah 1,14) (see Jonah 1,14): Israel must assume full responsibility for its past guilt.

*Verse 4.* In the case of Israel, God knows neither mercy nor pity. All of Israel’s abominations testify against it. **בְּזַהֲקָה תְּהִנֵּן:** God will neither forget nor attempt to cover up Israel’s sins. And yet God has never been closer to His people than at this terrible hour. In the night that is about to descend upon them, God reveals himself to them in His quality of **אֵל**.

5. Thus has my Lord spoken,  
God, Who reveals His loving  
kindness when He executes  
justice: Evil—the one unique  
evil—behold, it is coming.

6. The end has come, the end  
has come. He has awakened it  
against you—behold, it has come!

7. The wreath has come for you,  
inhabitant of the land; your destiny  
has come; the day is at hand—

ו. כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים לְעוֹד רַעַת אֶחָת  
רַעַת הַנֵּה בָּאָה:

ז. קָץ בָּא בָּא הַקָּץ הַקִּיז אֶלְיךָ  
הַנֵּה בָּאָה:

ח. בָּאָה הַצְפִּינָה אֶלְיךָ יוֹשֵׁב

**Verse 5.** It is **ה אלקים** Who will send the evil. It is His response to **רעות** (אחת) **אתה רעה**—**רעות** (אחת) **אשר פש** denotes either “one single time,” as in Psalms 89, 36 or, “one,” as in Daniel 8, 13 **אחד קורין**. God waited for a very long time before finally responding to all their **רעות** with His own **רעיה**.

**Verse 6.** **קָץ**, the end: It is in His loving kindness that He has stirred up (הַקִּיז) this “end” (**קָץ**) for you, in order to put an end to your **רעות** (note the etymological relationship between **קָץ** “end” and **לְקַיֵּם** “to awaken”). However, this “end” can be brought about only by the evil that is about to strike; hence **הַנֵּה בָּאָה**.

**Verse 7.** **צְפִירָה**: According to some commentators, this word is derived from **צְפָרָה**, the Aramaic for “morning.” Others associate it with **צְפָר**, “interweave,” i.e., the inexorable cycle of fate that cannot be “unraveled” or undone.

The word **צְפִירָה** occurs in only one other Scriptural passage. We find it in Isaiah 28, 5. There, Ephraim [the name for the Northern Kingdom] is pictured as adorning the hair on his head with withered flowers and succumbing to drunken madness. Ephraim spurns the crown, the wreath that God sought to place upon his head. Only when harsh blows of fate will rouse him from his stupor will he permit God to become his **מַגְדָּלָה**, his wreath of glory.

Perhaps the present text may be interpreted in a similar vein: The people of Israel have spurned the wreath God wished to weave for them. But then the day will come when the people of Israel will suffer the fate they deserve. Nations whose favor the people of Israel sought in vain are now preparing their own wreaths for them: blood-stained wreaths of thorns. We read in Verse 10: **תָּמָר הַצְפִּינָה בְּךָ הַמֶּה**. Now you have the wreath you have brought upon yourself; it is the rod with which the nations are threatening you, the rod of chastisement in the hand of God. Israel is waiting for the day that will bring **הַד חֲרֵם**, rejoicing like the exultation that resounds from the hills at the time of

the alarm of confusion, and not jubilation from the mountains!

8. Now—very soon, I will pour out My fury upon you and spend My anger against you; I will judge you according to your ways and I will call you to account for all your abominations.

9. And My eye will not spare you, and I will not have compassion; according to your ways shall I call you to account, and your abominations shall be in your midst, and you will recognize that I am ה' Who strikes the blow.

10. Behold, the day; behold, it comes, the wreath comes forth; the rod bursts forth, impudence is in bloom—

הארץ בָּא הַעֲתָה קְרוּב הַיּוֹם  
מִרְוחַמָּה וְלֹא־יָהִרְגֶּר הַרְבִּים:

8. עַתָּה מִקְרֻוב אֲשָׁפֹךְ חַמְתִּי  
עַלְיךָ וּכְלִיתִי אֲפִיכָּךְ וְשִׁפְטוּחֵיךָ  
כְּדָרְכֶיךָ וְגַתְתִּי עַלְיךָ אֶת בְּלִ  
תְּחַזְבּוּתְךָ:

9. לְאַדְתְּחֹסָ עִינֵּי לֹא אָחַמְלָ  
כְּדָרְכֶיךָ עַלְיךָ אָפָנוֹ וְתְּחַזְבּוּתְךָ  
בְּתוֹךְ תְּהִנֵּיגָ וְרַעֲתָם כִּי אַנְגִּי  
יְהוָה מֶפְחָה:

10. הַגָּה הַיּוֹם הַגָּה בָּאָה יְצָאת  
הַאֲפָרָה אֲצִי הַמְּפָשָׂה פָּרָח הַזָּרוֹן:

the vintage harvest (for see **הַדָּר** see Jeremiah 48, 33). Instead, the day that comes brings with it, panic and confusion. This disillusionment was necessary because it was the only way Israel could be brought to its senses. נֵג: "fate," as in Psalms 31, 16 and 81, 16.

**Verses 8–9.** These verses resume the theme of Verses 3–4. It is ה' that has brought the day of evil upon His people so that they may recognize Him. It is God in His quality of ה' that deals the blow.

**אַלְקִי מִקְרֻוב שָׁהָה מִקְרֻוב:** The term might be interpreted in the sense of proximity (Jeremiah 23,23). At no time is ה' closer to His people than in the day when it is stricken with unspeakable suffering. [God says]: "Now that I am close to them, I will pour out My wrath upon them."

**Verse 10.** יְצָאת (like צָהָב and צָהָר) denotes the emergence of a plant (see Isaiah 11,1). A serious illusion must be corrected. Israel has been defeated by an adversary stronger than itself. But this enemy is morally no better than the hapless people that is bleeding to death from the blows of his sword נֵגָה: We might have expected the text to use נֵגָה for "rod of chastisement" (see Jeremiah 1). נֵגָה: The rod in the hand of the triumphant foe is guided by the hand of God; it is נֵגָה אֱלֹקִים (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 4,2). The triumph of the adversary only appears to be a triumph of evil.

11. (Your) lack of principles has become the [supporting] rod for evil—not because of them [the enemy], not because of their multitude, their surging masses; it is not they that cause the widespread lamentation.

12. And (therefore) when the hour of destiny comes and the day is at hand, let the buyer not rejoice and let the seller not mourn, for the fury (of God) is upon all her surging masses.

11. הַחֲמֵס | קָם לְמִטְהָרֶשׁ לֹא־  
מֵהֶם וְלֹא מִתְּמוֹנָם וְלֹא מִתְּמֻמָּם  
וְלֹא־יָנַת בָּהֶם:

12. בָּא הַעַת הַגַּעַת הַיּוֹם הַקּוֹנֶה  
אַל־יִשְׂפַּח וְרִפְוָכֵר אֶל־יִתְּאַגֵּל כִּי  
חֶרְזָן אֶלְקָל־הַמּוֹנָה:

*Verse 11.* It is not the enemy's superior power that has defeated Israel. It is **םָם** that has destroyed the Jewish state. “גָּול, outright robbery, will never be allowed to prevail in any society; society knows how to protect itself from such a calamity by punishing and imprisoning the guilty. The enemy that could destroy society is **םָם**, evil done with devious cunning. Such evil cannot be prevented by punishments from human authorities; it can be removed from this world only if men develop a conscience that will hold them accountable to God for their actions. This conscience, the inner core of humanity, is killed by immorality. Hence immorality, by deflecting man's conscience, promotes **םָם** thereby causing irreparable harm to society” (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 6,11). The First Jewish Commonwealth was “filled with wrongdoing” (Verse 23: מלאה חמס), thus putting the rod of chastisement into the hands of the evildoers. (צָע probably refers to the triumphant enemy; see Verse 21: נְתִירָיו בְּנֵר חֲרִים לְנוּ לְרֹשֵׁי אָרֶץ לְשָׁלֵל.) Israel has caused its own defeat. Its defeat was not brought about “by them” לא **םָם** (referring to רְשֵׁעַ, i.e., by the **רְשֵׁעַ** **הָאָרֶץ**), nor by the strength of their enemies: ולא מִתְּמוֹנָם. Their **חַטָּאת** alone could never have won the day. Israel's enemies are nations that are **הַקְּשָׁעָה**, a disordered, confused mob; see commentary on Chapter 5, 7) Had Israel itself not turned into a **סְנוּן** (see *ibid.*) its enemies would never have been able to defeat it. **לוֹא נָה בָּהֶם:** It was not Israel's enemies that have caused the wailing and lamentation now rife among the people of Israel. Israel alone has brought this catastrophe upon itself. (Note: the Hirsch Commentary to Genesis 6, 11 develops a different interpretation of this verse.)

*Verse 12.* Therefore, let the triumphant enemy not exult in Israel's fateful turn. Israel has forfeited its political independence by its own actions. But let the victor who “purchased” it not rejoice at Israel's destruction. (The terms **קָנוֹה** and **טוֹרָה** are used in a similar context in Isaiah 52,3 and Zechariah 11,5.)

13. For even if the seller does not return to the property he has sold, their life will remain alive—for the Prophet's word pronounced over their surging masses will not remain without effect, and no one can strengthen himself for life as long as his guilt rests upon him.

14. Let them sound the horn and prepare everything for battle; but not one will go to war—for My anger is upon her whole multitude.

15. The sword outside; pestilence and famine within; whoever is in the field will die by the sword, and whoever is in the city will be consumed by famine and the plague.

כ. כי המוכר אל-הטמך לא ישוב עוד בחיתם קירחון אל-כל-המונה לא ישוב ואיש בעוננו חיתו לא-יתחיקו:

14. תקעו בתקוע והכין הפל ואי להלך למלחמה כי תרוני אל-כל-המונה:

15. החרב בחוץ והרבב והרעב מבית אשר בשורה בחרב ימות ואשד בשער רעב ונבר יאכלנו:

Let the victorious foe, rather, tremble in fear of God's wrath which throughout history has struck nations that were in fact considered as **חַטָּא**, a confused, surging mob which lacked the concept of God to unite them and shape their lives. (This is in contrast with **אֶצְבָּע**; see Chapter 5, Verse 7.)

*Verse 13.* True, it will be a long time before Israel will return to its soil. But even though it has been separated from its land and soil, Israel will survive. **חיתו**, the living, vital element within it (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 143,3) will survive the loss of Israel's political independence. **ים**, the eternal word of God's own prophecy has come to pass. This prophecy was that, like any other national entity that has lost its right to existence because it has become a **חַטָּא**, Israel, too, would lose its political independence. Furthermore, Israel will not be restored to political power until its burden of guilt has been wiped out by its sufferings in *galuth*. But by the same token, those who "bought" Israel may rest assured that the Divine **ים** will come true also in their case. **מיוחשי**, as in Genesis 48,2.

*Verses 14–15.* In view of all the foregoing, it is pointless for Israel to offer resistance and to arm itself for battle. **חַנְצֵה הָלֵךְ ל-מִלחָמָה**: The outcome of the struggle was decided before Israel lifted a sword in self-defense. For this time God will not go forth to battle on Israel's side. As long as Israel remains a **חַטָּא** it can never win. Sword, hunger and pestilence will lie in wait for Israel at every turn.

16. Their refugees will flee and will dwell in the mountains like doves of the valleys, all trembling with agitation, each one burdened with his own guilt.

17. All hands will hang limp, and all knees will melt like water.

18. They will gird themselves with sackcloth; terror will overwhelm them; shame will be upon all faces and baldness on all their heads.

19. They will cast their silver out into the streets, and their gold will become to them as an object from which to withdraw—their silver and their gold will not be able to save them on the day of God's fury; they will not satisfy their souls nor fill their innards, for it has become a stumbling block of their guilt.

ז. זְפַלְתּוּ פָלִיטִים וְהֵן אֶל־  
הַהֲרֹם כִּי־עָנָה הַגְּאוּת כָּלָם הַמֹּתָּא  
אִישׁ בְּעֻנוֹת:

ח. בְּלִהְיוּתִים תְּרִפְנִיהָ וּכְלִי־  
בְּרִכּוֹת תְּלִכְנָה פִּים:

ט. וְחִנְרֹנוּ שְׁקִים וּכְסִתְתָּה אֶתְּתָם  
פָּלָצֹות וְאֶל־פָּנִים בּוּשָׂה וּבְכָל־  
רְאִשּׁוּם קָרְחָה:

י. בְּסֶפֶם בְּחוֹצֹות יָשְׁלִיכוּ וּוּהַבָּם  
לְנָגָה וְהִיא בְּסֶפֶם זְהָבָם לְאַיּוֹבָל  
לְהַצִּילָם בָּיוֹם עֲבֹרָת וְהַנְּפָשָׁם  
לֹא וְשָׁבְעוּ וּמְעִירָם לֹא יִמְלָא פִּירָא  
מְכֻשָּׁל עֲוֹנָם הִוָּה:

אין להן לפולחתה או נסיבותה או גורלה של הארץ (Verse 14).

בושה ורעה, as in Psalms 55,6. The word generally denotes shame, but here, perhaps more to the point, it denotes woeful disillusionment. For קראה see our commentary to Jeremiah 16,6.

Verse 19. Not even gold and silver will save them. In their tragic delusion they sacrificed everything, surrendered all that they should have held sacred to alien gods. In vain did Israel's prophets try to stem the people's folly. Israel was "wedded" to its gold. Its gold brought it to Israel and now has caused Israel to become a "niddah" נידָה, derived from נִידָה, denotes removal from a place to which, or from a person to whom, one really belongs. רורה is an apt term for a condition that necessitates a temporary separation of husband and wife in their marital relationship" (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 12,2). Israel discards all its gold. Now at the moment of its defeat, it has come to the realization at last that neither silver nor gold can satisfy the soul or even ensure survival. Israel's deification of material wealth has brought about its downfall (טכשָׁל). Only after Israel has renounced this deification will it be allowed to rise again.

**20.** The beauty of its ornament has become its pride; they fashioned from it the idols of their abominations, their horrors. That is why I have given it to them as an object from which to withdraw.

**21.** I will give it as a prey into the hand of strangers, and as a spoil to the wicked of the earth; let them desecrate it.

**22.** I will turn My face away from them, and they will desecrate My treasure; men of violence will break into it and desecrate it.

**23.** Prepare the chain! For the land is filled with blood-guilt and the city is filled with perfidy.

20. וְאַכְבִּי עָרֵיו לְנֹאָן שְׁמָרוּ וְצְלָמָיו תְּחֻזְבָּתָם שְׁקֹצִים עֲשָׂו בָּו עַל־כֵּן נִתְתִּיו לָהֶם לְגַדְעָה:

21. וְנִתְתִּיו בִּירְדָּהִוִּים לְבָנוֹ יְלִרְשָׁעִי הָאָרֶץ לְשָׁלָל וְחַלּוּחָה:

22. וּבְסְבּוֹתִי פְנֵי מִקְּמָם וְתַחְלָלוּ אֶת־צְפּוֹנִי וּבְאֶרְבָּה פְרִיצִים וְחַלּוּחָה פ

23. עֲשֵׂה הַרְתּוֹקֵבִי הָאָרֶץ מְלָאָה מִשְׁפָּט רְכִימָם וְהַעֲיר מְלָאָה חַמְפָּסָם אֲחַלְלָוּה קָרֵי.

*Verse 20.* They thought they needed nothing else but the ornaments of material wealth. They had come to view gold and silver as the quintessence of human achievement for which they sacrificed their God-given human dignity (see Hosea 2). "They regarded a faded flower as the beauty of their splendor" (Isaiah 28,1) (איך נבל צבי חסרתו).

*Verse 21.* It will take brute force to free Israel from their lethal errors. But once this has been accomplished, ביום ההוא יהיה ה כבאותו לעתרת צבי, "God will become the crown of their beauty, the wreath of their glory" (ibid. 28,5).

*Verse 21.* The gold and the silver will fall into the hands of a triumphant enemy who will be permitted to enjoy his loot for a while, and even to use it for his abominable purposes, believing he can do so with impunity. But you, Israel, will not be allowed such use. You have profaned your gold; your slavish addiction to wealth has defiled you.

*Verse 22.* Nay more. God has permitted an enemy to "break through" (פרץ) all bounds to defile His *mekdash* (see Rashi), the place where His most precious treasure is hidden (צון). For, even as it had defiled its gold and its silver, so, too, Israel has stripped the Divine Sanctuary of its spiritual significance, long before the enemy broke into its chambers and desecrated it.

*Verse 23.* God has turned His countenance away. Much though it grieves Him, He has let the enemy have his way with Israel; it is unavoidable.

*Verse 23.* עֲשֵׂה הַרְתּוֹקֵבִי: It is God Himself Who, through the Prophet, hands

24. Therefore I will bring the wicked among the nations that they may take possession of their houses, and I will cause the pride of the strong to vanish, and the sites that should have hallowed them will be desecrated.

25. The appointed end will come—but they will search for peace, and it is not there.

26. Calamity will follow

24. והבאתני רעוי גוים ווירשו את־  
בְּתִיהם וְהַשְׁבָּתוּ גָּאוֹן עָזִים וְגַחֲלָי  
סְכָרֵשִׁיהם:

25. קָפְרָה־בָּא וּבְקָשׁו שְׁלוֹם וְאַיִן:

26. הַזֶּה עַל־הָזֶה תָּבוֹא וְשָׁמַעַת

the chain to the most wicked among the nations (see Verse 24) who will lead His people into bondage.

הארץ מלאה משפט וטיט—העיר מלאה חטא. This sequence of events should not come as a surprise. If חטא reigns supreme in the City of God, the whole country will also fall before long under its unbearable burden of guilt. Furthermore with regard to this juxtaposition and the connecting 'ו', see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 5.7 וטיט וטרמה יתעכַב (ה): 'The emphasis is placed on the conjunction *vav*. 'The Lord detests the man of murder and deceit.' He detests not only the murderer, who is held in contempt by human society as well, but also the crafty deceiver. For deceit is as hateful to God as murder."

*Verse 24.* נָאַנְצָוִים: In Chapter 24, Verse 21 the expression נָאַנְצָוִים is used with reference to the Sanctuary. נָאַנְצָוִים has the same meaning in the present verse. They could have drawn strength from the מִזְבֵּחַ but they considered the possession of gold and silver their sole נָאַנְצָוִם (Verse 20). Initially, God permits the enemy to take possession of Israel's homes. After that, he allows the enemy also to destroy the Sanctuary that has ceased long ago to be a מִזְבֵּחַ. Hence the use of the form קָרְבָּן: The קָרְבָּן was intended to serve them as *their* מִזְבֵּחַ, to give them their true strength by raising them to the spiritual level of sanctity. See also Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 26,31: 'The plural form קָרְבָּנִים is used in order to stress the fact that the Sanctuary was divided into three sections, each representing a higher level of sanctity. Thus the intended function of the Sanctuary becomes apparent: it is not so much a 'holy place' as it is a source of increasing personal sanctification.'

כללו is the *niphil*, passive of *לְלַל*.

*Verse 25–27.* מִלְמָד (see Isaiah 38,12); R. Hirsch comments: "The use of מִלְמָד in Rabbinic parlance would support the interpretation of this expression in the sense of giving an exact definition, weighing carefully, justifying a given conclusion." In Verse 6 the text reads בְּמִלְמָד; in Verse 25 it is קְפֻדָה בְּמִלְמָד.

calamity, report will follow report—and (in vain) will they demand words of prophecy from prophets; and instruction will perish from the priest and counsel from the elders.

27. The king shall wrap himself in mourning, and the prince shall clothe himself in numb terror, and the hands of the populace shall be paralyzed; I will deal with them according to their ways, and as they deserve it, so will I judge

אֵל-שְׁמוּעָה תִּהְיֶה וּבְקַשׁוֹ חַווֹּן  
מִנְבֵּיא וְתֹרֶה תָּאכַר מִכְתֵּן  
עֲצָה מְזֻקְנִים:

27. הַמֶּלֶךְ יַתְּאַבֵּל וְנִשְׁיאָ  
וְלֹבֶשׂ שְׁפֵטָה וּנְרִי עַמְּדָה אָרֶץ  
תִּבְהַלֵּנה מִדְרְכֵם אֲנָשָׂה אָוָתָם

The end has not come by chance; it was deliberately planned by God. All the developments led up to this finale, which had been determined by God and foretold by His messenger. And yet, when the catastrophe finally comes, it takes the nation and its peoples unawares. Men of God had tried again and again to open the eyes of the people and its leaders but to no avail. The Book of Jeremiah devotes lengthy chapters to the pernicious intrigues by which unscrupulous, power hungry "prophets and priests" succeeded in lulling the state and its people into a false sense of security until the very last moment. The end is near, but they are still seeking peace. (See Jeremiah 4, 10; 6,14; 8,11; 14,19 et al., and our commentary, *ibid.*)

History will reflect the words of God's messenger through the graphic experiences of Israel's national catastrophes, wiping out the last traces of delusion and self-deception. The false prophets will be exposed as common intriguers —**וּבְקַשׁוֹ חַווֹּן מִנְבֵּיא** (טוקנים). Priests who for so long have falsified the pure teachings of God and leaders who for so long have misused their positions of influence will finally be exposed in all their wretchedness. A once-proud kingdom will contemplate in mute horror the ruins of shattered arrogance. A hapless nation will endure the rage of a cruel, triumphant foe without being able to offer any resistance (**בָּהֳלָה**, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 6,3). Only then, at long last, will the blinders fall from their eyes. Only then will they understand that if God in His justice now inflicts harsh punishments upon them, this is no more than "**זֶה**" they deserve for their sins.

**וַיַּדְרֹעַ כִּי אַנְּיָה**: That will be the time when **הָ** will be able to set His people on the road toward a better, happier future. **זֶה אַנְּיָה**: This is the

וְכִמְשֻׁפְטֵיכֶם אֲשַׁפְטָם וַיַּרְאֲנוּ כִּי־אָנִי וְרוֹהָה פ

ח ז וְזַהֲרֵי | בָּשָׂנָה הַשְׁשִׁית  
בָּשָׂרִיבְּחַמְשָׁה לְחַרְשָׁ אָנִי יוֹשֵׁב

**Chap. 8.** 1. It came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth [month] on the fifth [day] of the month, I dwell in my house, the elders of Judah [are] around me, that

recurrent theme (Chapters 6 and 7) that the Prophet addresses to his distant homeland (Chapter 6, Verse 2). But even when he addresses the *golah*, he uses the language of drastic events regarding the catastrophe. For as long as the Sanctuary and the royal fortress still stand in the homeland, not even those already in exile will come to the realization implicit in the words יְדֻעַּו כִּי אָנִי ז.

**Chapter 8.** The eventful days during which the Prophet painted the horrendous picture of the impending catastrophe had hardly passed when the "hand of God," for which Ezekiel was the willing, selfless tool, instructed him to deliver a new, alarming message to the *golah*. In the two previous chapters (6 and 7) the Prophet's eye had been directed to the distant "hills of Israel" as he described the dark night that would have to fall upon his homeland that had gone astray from the paths of God if there was to be any hope of a new and happier dawn. Now he was to be given a direct insight into the conditions that prevailed in Jerusalem, his native city; he would become witness to the events that were unfolding in the Sanctuary there. The Prophet describes what he saw in powerful, dramatic terms reflecting the compelling impact of the tragedy he had beheld with his own eyes.

**Verse 1.** תְּנַשֵּׁן תְּנַשֵּׁן: If we note the date given in this verse and recall the date when Ezekiel first received his call (Chapter 1, Verse 2), and then consider the time he spent in chains within sight of Jerusalem under siege, the connection between his past actions and the experiences that now follow becomes clear. In accordance with God's command (Chapter 3, Verse 24), the Prophet is still in seclusion at his home, surrounded by the elders of Judah. These "elders" may have been leaders of the *golah*, or they may have been (though this is not expressly stated in our text) part of that elite group who had settled in Babylonia as "tradesmen and locksmiths" (II Kings 24, 14) to help build a new future for the exiles there. They formed the Prophet's immediate entourage; they did not abandon him in his isolation; they felt for him and

the hand of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, came mightily upon me there.

2. And I saw and, behold, a form...

3. It stretched out the shape of a hand and took me by a lock of my head; and the spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven

בְּכַיְתִּי וּוֹקֵנִי הוֹנֶה יוֹשְׁכִים לְפָנָי  
וְתַפְלֵל עַלִי שְׁמָךְ אֶרְאָנוּ יְהוָה:

2. וְאֶרְאָה וְהִנֵּה רְמֹת בְּמִרְאָה  
אֲשֶׁר מִרְאָה קָתְנָנוּ וּלְקָטָה אֲשֶׁר  
וּמִפְתָּנָנוּ וּלְמַעַלָּה בְּמִרְאָה־זֹהָר  
כְּעֵין הַחַשְׁמָלָה:

3. וַיַּשְׁלַח פָּבִנית יָד וַיַּקְרְבָּי  
בְּצִיצָת רָאשִׁי וְתַשְׁא אָטֵי רָוחִי

suffered with him. They were filled with sympathy for him as they witnessed his actions and heard the message he addressed to the distant homeland. Then, suddenly, Ezekiel was seized by the overpowering hand of God. אֶרְאָנוּ אֱלֹקִים. The Master called upon His servant to whom, when He first called upon him. He had granted a profound insight into the workings of His Providence. God now comes to him, as it were, in a new act of revelation.

*Verse 2.* The words recorded in this verse tell us the form in which Divine Providence was revealed to Ezekiel. This revelation must have come to him in a profound connection with the experiences that will now be told, interpreting the future before it actually comes to pass. In understanding this passage, it suffices for us to know that אֶרְאָנוּ אֱלֹקִים, God, in His eternal, disciplining and constructive love, led the Prophet into the very midst of the corruption that had spread even to the holiest of the holy places. It is from this vantage point that we should study the Prophet's narrative. However, we must always keep in mind the words of our Sages (Rashi) אָסֹר לְהַחֲבוֹן בְּפָסֹק הוּא which bar us forever from attempting to penetrate into the deeper meaning of this verse. Our approach to the Word of God as it comes to us through the Prophets must always be one of profound awe and reverence.

*Verse 3.* תְּבִנית יָד: see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 4,16.

טוֹרָאת אֱלֹקִים (see Chapter 1,1) caused him to set foot once more in Jerusalem and to visit the halls of the Sanctuary. The words זְשָׁא וַיַּחֲנוּ בְּצִיצָת וּבְגָרָבִין which convey the impression that the Prophet was physically transported to Jerusalem, are employed to make the insights given to Ezekiel by טְרָאות אֱלֹקִים seem like actual happenings rather than abstract visions. That which the Prophet's eye beheld seemed to him so real, so accurate in every detail, that he felt as if he had indeed been physically transported to Jerusalem.

and brought me to Yerushalayim, through manifestations of God, to the entrance of the inner gate that lay facing toward the north, where

בִּזְרַחֲתָה אָרֶץ וּבֵין הַשָּׁמְמִים וְתַבָּא  
אָתוֹ יְרוּשָׁלָקָמָה בְּמִרְאוֹת אֱלֹהִים  
אַל-פָּתַח שַׁעַר הַפְּנִימִית הַפּוֹנֶה

He saw himself standing on holy ground, at the entrance to the inner northern gate that led to the שׂורה at the north side of the altar. Only from that side, where in the היכל there stood the Table symbolizing the subordination of all material wealth and ambition to the Will of God, was the worshipper permitted to approach God (שָׁחִיטה בְּצַפֵּן). If man is to be found worthy of God's nearness, he must cease to lead the "uncontrolled, sensual" existence that characterizes animals. He must "remove all the material and sensual aspects of his existence from the bondage of physical non-freedom and elevate them to the level of free-willed morality." Man must always see himself, along with all the physical phases and relationships of his life, as standing in the presence of God. (For a more detailed discussion of these concepts, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 1,5.)

From this holy place, the call went forth also to the gentile world to seek the nearness of the God, (עַורי צַפֵּן, תָּהַנֵּעַ אָמָה שְׁמַעַשְׂה בְּצַפֵּן, וּבְחַיִם קָסָף), "to seek God's presence even toward midnight, when life seems darkest" (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 3, 1). The Sanctuary symbolized God's wish that all mankind should free itself from the heathen ideology which considers man's physical well-being dependent on the favor of jealous natural deities or physical forces. Instead, men should subordinate all their physical and material aspirations to the Will of God, so that they may be certain of His blessed help even when fate appears to be as dark as midnight.

It was at this place in the Sanctuary that Ezekiel stood, very close to the מזבח which commemorates that bleak period when the accursed reign of Menasseh brought desolation even to the Sanctuary of God. The word סמל seldom occurs in Scripture; related to סמל, it seems to imply the concept of "form." Thus, פסל מוֹתָה כֹּל סִלְמָה is a categorical prohibition against the making of any three-dimensional representation of any form whatsoever, even if the composition were entirely imaginary (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 4,16). In II Chronicles 33, 7 (פסל הַסִּלְמָה) is used with reference to the three-dimensional representation, or statue, of the אֱשֹׁרֶת which, according to II Kings 21,7, Menasseh set up in the Sanctuary of God. Menasseh knew very well why, as we are told here, he placed that סמל on the northern side of the Sanctuary. His aim was to make his foolish subjects believe that they had to pray to the "jealous deities of nature" for the physical and material necessities of life. But was it not obvious that such

there was the place of an image representing envy that [sought to] curtail His right.

**4.** And, behold, there [was] the glory of the God of Israel in the vision that I had beheld in the valley;

**5.** He said to me: Son of mankind, now lift up your eyes toward the north. So I lifted up my eyes toward the north and, behold, northward of the gate that led to the altar there was the same likeness, representing envy, at the entrance!

**6.** He said to me: Son of mankind, do you see what they are

אֲפֹנָה אֲשֶׁר־שֵׁם מַוְשֵׁב סִפְלָה  
הַקְּנָאָה הַמְּקָנָה:

וְהַנְּגָה־שֵׁם כְּבוֹד אֱלֹהִי יְשֻׁרָּאֵל  
כְּפָרָה אֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי בְּקָעָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי כּוֹדָרִים שָׂאַדְנָא  
שַׁיְגִיךְ בָּרֶךְ אֲפֹנָה וְאַשְׁא עִנִּי  
בָּרֶךְ אֲפֹנָה וְהַנְּגָה מַצְפָּן לְשָׁעֵד  
הַמְּנוּבָח סִפְלָה הַקְּנָאָה הַזֶּה בְּבָאָה:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי כּוֹדָרִים הַרְאָה  
אָתָּה מִלְּהָם עֲשָׂים תְּعַבֵּות בְּרָלוֹת  
סֵה הַמִּקְרֵי.

shameless conduct, such a brazen attempt to infringe upon His eternal rights, would eventually cause God to "assert His rights" (this is the interpretation of הַקְּנָאָה, see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 20,5). It was then that Josiah came to the rescue, restoring the Sanctuary to its original state of purity. The סִפְלָה was removed (II Kings 23,6)—The site alone remained as a shameful reminder of that period of utter corruption. This is the place where we now see Ezekiel standing.

*Verse 4.* At this place, Ezekiel glimpses the glory of the God of Israel in the form in which it had appeared to him in the *golah* (Chapter 1)—seeking a place where it might abide. Can God's still find, on sacred ground, men who are ready to elevate their lives toward the *שְׁכִינָה*, so that the *מִקְדָּשׁ* has not truly ceased to be the Sanctuary of God?

*Verse 5.* The Prophet is then told to look to the north; one glance was sufficient for him to see that the site where the סִפְלָה had once stood was not vacant now. For there at that place which gave access to the altar through the northern gate, where the north side of the altar symbolically represents the eternal, lofty standards set for man by the God of Israel, the Prophet beheld the repulsive image of סִפְלָה, its features contorted with envy.

הַקְּנָאָה: This is the only passage in Scripture where *הַקְּנָאָה* is used to denote an entrance.

*Verse 6.* "Do you see it?" מִתְּשִׁים עֲשָׂים (similar to Exodus 4,2, see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.; the absence of the ה in *הַנְּגָה* detracts attention from *הַנְּגָה* and

doing? Great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here to cause estrangement from My Sanctuary—but you will see yet other great abominations.

7. He brought me to the door of the forecourt, and I saw, behold, one hole in the wall.

8. He said to me: Do force your way into the wall. I forced my way into the wall, and behold, there was a door.

9. He said to me: Now enter and see the evil abominations they are committing here.

10. I entered and looked, and there was every form of creeping things and repulsive beasts and

אֲשֶׁר בַּיְתֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל | עֲשִׂים פָּה  
לְרֹחַקָּה מִעַל מִקְדָּשִׁי וְזַעַר תְּשׁוֹב  
תְּרָאָה תְּמֻצּוֹת גְּדוּלֹת: ס

7. וַיָּבֹא אֹתִי אֶל־פֶּתַח הַחֶצֶר  
וְאֶרְאָה וְהִגְּנָה חֲרִידָה בְּקִיר:

8. וַיַּאֲכַר אַלְיָן־אֲנָשִׁים חַטְרִינָא  
בְּקִיר וְאֶחָתָר בְּקִיר וְהִגְּנָה פֶּתַח  
אָחָר:

9. וַיַּאֲכַר אַלְיָן בָּא וְרָאָה אֶת־  
הַתְּמֻצּוֹת הַרְעוֹת אֲשֶׁר הֵם עֲשִׂים  
פָּה:

10. וְאֶבוֹתָה וְאֶרְאָה וְהִגְּנָה כָּל־  
פְּבִינָת בְּמִשְׁׁבְּתָה שְׁקָעָן וְכָל־

בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמֶּ). It is not so much *what* they are doing as the fact that they could acquiesce in acts that should have outraged their sense of morality. לְרֹחַקָּה מִעַל מִקְדָּשִׁי: this may mean that either that through their חַטּוּבָות they have estranged themselves from the God whose function it was to summon them into His blessed presence, or that with their חַטּוּבָות they have caused the שכינה to remove itself from the Sanctuary. The שכינה is waiting to enter its rightful dwelling place. But Israel keeps it from entering by placing a סַלְלָה in front of the entrance. Could there be any worse than that? But this is only the first of the sights Ezekiel will be shown. There is much more to come. Silently, without a word or a sound escaping from his lips, the Prophet follows where the שכינה leads him.

*Verses 7–9.* The Prophet bids him to move closer to the entrance of the gate into the חַטָּה. He notices a mysterious opening in the wall. He is commanded to force his way through that opening (תְּחַת). Having passed through the opening, he sees a door in front of him. What, the Prophet wonders, could be behind that door? Before he can enter the ominous chamber behind the door, the שכינה prepares him for the horrors he will see there.

*Verses 10–12.* Ezekiel is in a state of confusion. Is he still inside the Sanctuary of God or has he strayed into a distant, hidden chamber dedicated

every [conceivable] idol of the house of Israel engraved on the wall round about, round about—

**11.** And seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel, among them Yaazanyahu, son of Shafan, stood before them, each one holding his incense pan in his hand, and a swirling pillar of smoke rose upward.

**12.** He said to me: Have you seen, son of mankind, what the

גָּלוּלִי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל מְחַקֶּה עַל  
הַקּוֹרֶבֶב | סְכִיבָבָ:

וְשַׁבְעִים אִישׁ מְזֻקֵּן בֵּית־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּאֲגִירֵהוּ בְּרוֹשָׁפָן עַמְּדָה  
בְּתוֹכָם עַמְּרִים לְפָנֵיהם וְאִישׁ  
מְקַטְּרוֹתָו בָּגָדו וַעֲתָר עַגּוֹן־הַקְּטָרָת  
עַלָּה:

**12.** וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִי הַרְאֵת בְּרוֹאָדָם  
אֲשֶׁר זָקַנִּי בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲשָׂוֵם

to some mysterious Egyptian cult? The walls of the chamber in which he finds himself are covered with the monstrous creations of a heathen imagination. And there are men staring at these walls—not the common folk but the elders of the nation, seventy of them, even as the number of men in the Sanhedrin. Among them are men of renown. Each of them stands there holding his own censer (*טַקְטָרָה*) in his hand, doing homage to the images engraved upon the walls. Decadent men have gathered in this dark, mysterious hidden chamber so that, removed (as they think) from the watchful eye of God, *מִשְׁכִּיתוֹ*, each of them may worship the figments of his own imagination as he sees them reflected in the images on the wall (*מִשְׁכִּית*, from *מִשְׁׁחָה*, probably denotes a "physical portrayal intended to stimulate a specific thought process, i.e., a symbol;" see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 33,52). The eye of God these men think cannot penetrate the wasteland of their bleak, desolate lives "God does not see us," they say. Exalted far above the world and its concerns, He does not pay attention to the transient, fleeting lives of individual human beings. "God has forsaken the earth," they say. True, God had been the original Creator of the earth, but after Creation, He left the earth at the mercy of forces on whose favor or disfavor the fate of the earth, and of those who dwell upon it, now depends. Therefore these men say that "my happiness does not depend upon Him but only upon the forces that are part of this physical world" (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 16,3). If God has indeed left the world to its own devices, no power will seem too insignificant for man to worship and to beg for happiness and prosperity. In this sad moral decline, man has lost any feeling of moral revulsion he may once have had against a cult (*גָּלוּלִים*) that would bury forever the last shreds of his human dignity.

But if God no longer dwells on earth, why would He want His Sanctuary here? And so its halls will be taken over by cults whose rituals would seem

elders of the house of Israel are doing in the dark, each one in the chambers that serve his idol? For they say: God does not see us; God has forsaken the earth.

13. But He said to me: You will see yet other great abominations that they are committing.

14. He brought me to the entrance of the gate of the House of God which was toward the north and behold, there the women sit and weep over the Tammuz.

15. He said to me: Have you seen it, son of mankind? You will see yet other abominations, greater than these.

בְּחַשֶּׁךְ אִישׁ בְּחַדְרֵי מִשְׁכִּינָתוֹ כִּי  
אֲמָרוּ אֱלֹהִים אֵין וַיְהִי רָאָה אֶתְנָנוּ עָזָב  
וַיָּרַע אֶת־הָאָרֶץ:

13. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְيָהוּ עֹזֶר תְּשׁוֹב  
תְּرָאָה תְּעֻבּוֹת גָּרְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר־  
הַפְּהָה עָשָׂים:

14. וַיֹּבֶא אֶתְנָי אֶל־פֶּתַח שַׁעַר בֵּית־  
יוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר אֶל־הַצְּפֹנָה וְהַגָּהָה  
שֶׁם הַגְּשִׁים יִשְׁבּוּת מִכְּבוֹת אֶת־  
הַתְּפִמוֹן ס

15. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיָהוּ בְּרָאִית בְּזָדָם  
עֹזֶר תְּשׁוֹב תְּרָאָה תְּעֻבּוֹת גָּרְלוֹת  
מְאֻלָּה:

far more likely to help men get what they need. This should not have come as a surprise to the Prophet. And yet he must have been stunned beyond words as he followed the *שְׁכִימָה* through the desecrated halls of the Temple.

*Verse 14.* At the place where a gate gives access to the *הַכִּיל*, women sit wailing over Tammuz. The cult of Tammuz, probably a Babylonian name (see Gesenius\*), was similar to that of the ancient Greek deity Adonis, symbol of the beauty of nature. The women are mourning the tragedy of nature which comes to life each year in radiant beauty under the bright sun of springtime, only to wither away in the searing heat of the summer (see also Rashi). Babylonian and Greek nature worship is rampant at the northern entrance to the *הַכִּיל*, where the pure golden Table waits in vain for the presentation of the loaves of shew bread symbolizing the nation's endeavors before the watchful countenance of God Who sees all things and all men. But there are those who say, "God does not see us" (Verse 12), and that is why Jewish women weep at the thought that the fiery heat of the summer sun might have killed the deities to whom they have been looking for their own joyless existence.

*Verse 15.* תְּעֻבּוֹת נָדְלָה מְאֻלָּה—Could there be any greater abominations on sacred soil than these?

\* Gesenius, Heinrich F.W., (1786-1842), author of a classic comparative Hebrew dictionary. (Ed.)

16. He brought me into the inner forecourt of the House of God, and behold, at the entrance to the *heichal* of God, between the vestibule and the altar, about twenty-five men — their backs turned on the *heichal* of God, their faces to the east; and they bowed down, in a depraved manner, toward the east, toward the sun!

17. He said to me: Have you seen it, son of mankind? Is it a trifling matter for the house of Judah to commit the abominations

16. וַיָּבֹא אֶתְךָ אֶל־הַחֲצֵר גִּוְתִּירָה  
הַפְנִימִית וְהַגְּדַלְתָּה הַיכָּל וְלֹהֶ  
בֵּין הַאֲלֹתָם וּבֵין הַפְּנוּזָם קָעָשָׂרִים  
וּמְמַשֵּׁה אֲישׁ אֲלֹרִים אֶל־  
הַיכָּל וְלֹהֶ וּפְנֵיכֶם לְרָדְפָה וּקְפָה  
מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם קָרְפָה לְשָׁמֶשׁ:

17. וַיֹּאֲכַר אֶלְיוֹן הַרְאִית בּוֹרָאָרָם  
בְּנָקֵל לְבֵית יְהוָה מְעֻשּׂות אֶת־

*Verses 16–17.* About 25 men are standing at the entrance, their backs turned on the *heichal*, their faces looking to the east. They are worshipping the rising sun! *וְלֹהֶה מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם* not, *וְלֹהֶה מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם*: they have sunk so low that they no longer consider it sufficient to worship the forces of nature in a place hallowed to God (Note: the unusual construction *מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם* is typical of the terseness of prophetic language; it is a combination of *מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם* and *מְשֻׁתְּחוּתָם*). Their *הַשְׁחָחוֹתָה* has taken the lowest form of bestiality (*הַשְׁחָחוֹתָה*).

הנקל: In a seemingly effortless manner, they dethroned God and committed the *הַשְׁחָחוֹתָה* that introduced the unbridled worship of nature into all realms of private and public life. They did not consider that the moral depravity which goes hand in hand with all nature worship would also corrupt the very foundations of their society — *כִּי מִלְאָוָא אֶת הָאָרֶץ חַטָּאת* (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 6,11) (*וחשׁתָה הָאָרֶץ לְפָנֵי הַאֱלֹקִים וּמִלְאָוָא הָאָרֶץ חַטָּאת*). But now the situation had become even worse. Their *הַשְׁחָחוֹתָה* has taken on dimensions in which men not only disregard but actively fight against the standards of moral sanctification set by God. *אֲחַדְתָם אֶל הַיכָּל* *הַ*: Their worship of the sun has inspired them with the audacity to turn their backs on the *הַיכָּל* which symbolizes man's duty to sanctify all his abilities (*וְיַכְלֵל הַיכָּל*) to the One *לְ* *וְיַכְלֵל* (*וְיַכְלֵל הַיכָּל*) Whom he received them (*וְיַכְלֵל עָוֹן*). They have impudently rejected God by embracing the cult of *Pe'or*, "the god of shamelessness who was worshipped by giving brazen prominence to the most bestial aspects of human life" (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 25,3).

וְמִתְרָה: *וְמִתְרָה* denotes either the act of excretion that was the cult of *Pe'or* (see Rashi) or, in a figurative sense, the Phallus (as *וְמִתְרָה* as

that they have already committed here, that (through them) they have filled the land with iniquity, and now they also dare to provoke Me? And yet they fling the symbol of bestial depravity into their own faces!

**18.** But I, too, will act in flaming anger; My eye will know no clemency, and I will show no pity, and they will call out into My ears with a loud voice, but I will not hear them.

**Chap. 9. 1.** And He called into my ears with a mighty call:

הַתְּעוּבֹת אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂירָה כִּי־  
מַלְאָו אֶת־הָאָרֶץ חַמֵּס וַיָּשָׁבוּ  
לְהַכְעִימִי וְהַנִּסְעִים שְׁלָתִים אֶת־  
הַזּוֹמְרָה אֶל־אֲפָם:

18. וְגַם־אָנִי אָעַשָּׂה בְּחִמָּה לֹא־  
תְּחֻסֵּם עַינִי וְלֹא אָחַטֵּל וְקַרְאָוּ  
בְּאָזְנוֹ קֹל גָּדוֹל לֹא אָשְׁמַע אֹתוֹתָם:

ט. וַיָּקֹרֵא בָּאָזְנוֹ קֹל גָּדוֹל

"shoot" or "twig"— see Gesenius); i.e., the worship of Baal, the "supreme lord of all nature," with the phallus, the "symbol of the regenerative power in nature" (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 23, 14). The worship of Pe'or and Baal went hand in hand. These Jewish apostates attempted to "provoke" God by flinging into His face, as it were, the symbol of bestiality (according to the *Sifri*, the text which reads *אָפָם* "their face" is to be understood as meaning *אָפָה* "my face;" see also Rashi).

הַמְּשֻׁלְּחוּם אֶל הַכִּיל הַ  
אַחֲרֵיכֶם אֶל תְּהִלָּתָם אֶל אַמְמָם  
הַאֲתִי וְתַּמְכִידָם נָמָם הַ  
הַלְוָא אַתָּם . . .)

כִּי תַּלְיִד בְּנִים וּבְנִים וְגַם הַשְׁתָּמֵם וְשִׁתְמֵם פֶּל מְטוּחָה כָּל וְעַשְׂתָּמָה הרָע . . . לְהַכְעִימָה (Deuteronomy 4,25): This Divine warning was literally fulfilled on the site of the Sanctuary.

**Verse 18.** The day will come when their imagined pillars of strength, which were the roots of their corruption, will crumble beneath the fiery wrath of God. Then their feeble cries for help will rise up to Him but He will stay far away because His nearness must be deserved.

**Chapter 9, Verse 1.** The city's doom is fast approaching. Through His *תְּהִלָּתָם* God makes it clear that He Himself is the *פָּקָד*; see *פָּקָד פָּקָדֵי פָּקָד* (Exodus 3,16)

Fateful events of the city are already drawing near; every one the tool of destruction to be wrought by it in his hand.

2. And behold, six men coming from the path that leads to the upper gate which faces to the

לאמר קרבו פגימות העיר ואיש  
כלי משחתו בירוח:

2. והנה ששה אנשים באים |  
מדרך-שער העליון אשר מפנה

with reference to Israel's deliverance from Egypt. פך denotes an act of direct Divine Providence. God remains near to His people even when He seems far away. The messengers of His Providence who have been sent to bring destruction to the people of Israel are to do so only for the purpose of preparing the way for God's ultimate return to His people. The Sages (*Yalkut*) interpret וביהם פקי וסדרי פקדות פקדות as signifying the fulfilment of the Divine warning פקדות that was necessitated by the worship of the Golden Calf in the wilderness. The destruction of the Temple and the downfall of the state are simply consequences of the continuing chain of transgressions that began with Israel's defection from God to worship the Golden Calf. God's פקודה will not cease until the last trace of the abominations that keep estranging the people from His nearness has been wiped out.

*Verse 2.* Six men appear, armed with tools of destruction. They personify the Divine ששה אנשים אמר رب קאף אף זמה משחת משביד ומכליה: פקדות פקידות (שכח זה). These terms represent God's punishments on a rising scale. קאף is the term most commonly used to denote wrath; it is phonetically related to כוב, "a sense of outrage caused by conduct not in accordance with certain expectations" (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 9,7); אף "denotes an anger which shows in the face but which does not necessarily reflect an equal degree of anger in the heart;" חמה is a more intense form of אף, the true heat of rage (see Genesis 27,44). The wrath of God is first expressed in (see Verse 1), then intensifies to פשׁביר, a fury capable of "breaking" its object (in Verse 2) occurs in the form of כלי פשׁחית (כלי פשׁחית); it may finally culminate in מטללה, total destruction (see Chapter 11, Verse 13). פשׁח: destruction, demolition. סוף: a writing tool.

But in the midst of these men there is one, ואיש אחד, a messenger of God (שלשה פה). דברין היה משמש אותו מלאך טפיאלטור, כהן גדול, וקסנטור—an executioner that carries out death sentences, but at the same time he performs the functions of a high priest and scribe. He is in the midst of the six men "who bring destruction;" these men have been commanded to follow the messenger, פברו בער אהורי (Verse 5) and to carry out their sad mission under his direction. Even as "the Seventh Day joined the invisible to the visible, tying the bond between the Creator and His creation and between the Master and His work," so the "six men of destruction" who are about to destroy the

north, every one with the tool of its destruction in his hand; and one man in their midst, garbed in linen and a scribe's instrument on his loins—they came and stood beside the copper altar.

3. But the glory of the God of Israel departed from above the Cherub on which it had dwelt, toward the threshold of

צְפּוֹנָה וְאִישׁ כֶּלֶי מִפְצָזָה בַּיּוֹד  
וְאִישׁ־אָחָר בְּתוֹךְ לְבָשָׂרִים  
וְקַסְתָּה הַסְּפָרָה בְּקַתְנָנוּ וַיָּבֹא  
וַיַּעֲמֹדוּ אֶצְלָ מִזְבֵּחַ הַנְּחַשָּׁתָה:

וְוַיַּכְבֹּד | אֱלֹהֵינוּ יִשְׂרָאֵל נָעֵלָה  
סְעִלָּה הַקָּרוֹב אֲשֶׁר־הָיוּ עָלָיו אֶל  
סְפָטָנוּ הַבָּיִת וַיָּקֹרֵא אֱלֹהֵינוּ

state are described at the very outset as the visible messengers of the invisible Divine Providence. They must obey the orders of a " מלאך ה" (see *Collected Writings*, Vol. III, page 101).

Clad in the linen garments of the high priest and surrounded by the messengers of God's wrath, the איש אשר is described as standing near the "Copper Altar" (which was the *מִזְבֵּחַ הַעֲלָה*). Though, by the time of the Prophets, that altar had long been replaced by the Altar of Stones (Exodus 20.22), it should never have been permitted to lose its timeless significance. In this vein, the Second Book of Chronicles (Chapter 4) still describes King Solomon's Altar of Stones as *מִזְבֵּחַ נָשָׁת*. Its symbolic function was "to teach the paths which human nature, still unhallowed (hence *נָשָׁת*, copper, the metal symbolizing baseness, or lack of refinement), must pursue in order to meet the requirements of the ideals symbolized by the *דְּבָרִים* in the *הַכְּלָל* and the *דְּבָרִים* in the Sanctuary," (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 27).

סְמָקוֹם שָׁאוּמָרִים שִׁירָה לְפָנֵי טְרַשִּׁי מִן הַלִּיטָּשׁ שָׁאוּמָרִים שִׁירָה The טְרַשִּׁי stands at the place where the songs of the Levites, accompanied by the sounds of the נָשָׁת, were intended to summon the people to the nearness of God so that they might glorify and worship Him. His writing tools hang suspended from his waist. The moment has come when his stylus will inscribe for life those who have striven to follow the priestly directives near the Copper Altar, and note down for death those who have shown nothing but brazen scorn for the summons to sanctity. That is why his writing tools are tied to his waist, the place where the sword is usually kept by a fighter.

Verse 3. Chapter 8 recorded Ezekiel's visit to the Sanctuary and his realization that criminal indifference and contemptible depravity have driven God from the life of the Jewish people and thus also from His Sanctuary. Now, at a time when *מִלְאָכִילָה*, the messengers of destruction are already preparing to perform their sad mission, God shows to Ezekiel the depressing vision of *סְלֻוק שְׁכִינָה*. We might have thought that by this time God was already

the House—and called to the man who was garbed in linen and on whose loins was the instrument of the scribe.

4. And he spoke to him: Pass through the midst of the city, the midst of Yerushalayim, and make

**הַלְבָשׁ הַבְּרוּם אֲשֶׁר קָסַת הַפְּנִיר  
בְּמִתְגִּינוֹם**

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים צָבָא בְּתַחַן  
הָעִיר בְּתַחַן וּרְוֹשָׁלָם וְהַתְּעוּתָה  
אֵלָיו קָרֵי.

far away, but in fact He was still present even in that Sanctuary which was so full of abominations, waiting until the very last minute to see whether His deluded children might not come to their senses at the last hour, thus sparing Him the pain of having to withdraw from His Sanctuary. Slowly, hesitatingly, pausing ten times (שְׁנִינָה מְסֻעָה נָסַע שְׁנִינָה וּכְרָה לְאָה; see Chapter 10), the **שְׁנִינָה** of God at last departs from the midst of the people He had chosen as His own for all time.

Thus, the first phase of **סָלוֹק** **שְׁנִינָה** had already been completed: **לְכֹרֶב דְּמִצְבָּה וּנוֹעַדְתִּי לְךָ שֶׁם וּבְרוּתִי אֶתְךָ מַעַל כְּכָרְתִּים**. This had not been true for quite some time. The **כְּכָרְתִּים** was no longer the bearer of God's glory on earth. For only as long as the **כְּכָרְתִּים** rises toward **two cherubim**; i.e., as long as Israel guards the **אָרוֹן**—the Law of God—not only in its totality as one action (which would be represented by one cherub) but also through each and every one of its members (hence the presence of two cherubim representing the individuals of the nation; see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 25) are the conditions present that will permit the **שְׁנִינָה** of God to be intimately close to His people. God's sacred cause is in need of every single man, woman and child; each one of us bears upon his or her shoulders the responsibility for the Divinely-ordained mission that must be discharged by the nation as a whole.

**נָעַלה מַעַל הַכְּרוּב:** For a long time only one cherub had been raising its wings, receiving, upholding and protecting, toward God. For a long time, the spirit symbolized by the **אָרוֹן** had been missing from the individual members of the Jewish people even though the nation as such had not yet lost its distinct Jewish identity. But this had been the foreboding for the end. From that time on, the **שְׁנִינָה** of God had hovered **על הַכְּרוּב**; now it had already withdrawn to the threshold. Where are the courageous fighters for God's cause who, still fired with priestly fervor, would labor boldly and single-mindedly to rescue the nation and thus assure the survival of all its members?

**Verse 4.** **כִּבְדָּק יִשְׂרָאֵל**: God (**טוֹתָה רֹין**) (Verse 3) had already appointed the messengers of destruction that were to avenge His desecrated Sanctuary. But then **וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֱלֹהִים**, God (**מִדָּה הַרְחִימִים**) signaled to the man in the white linen garments with the writing tools tied to his waist, that he should leave the company of the "messengers of destruction." The messengers were to

על-מצחות האנשימים הנאנחים

a sign on the forehead of the men  
who sigh and cry out because of

---

continue following the man in the white garments (Verse 5) who would point out to them all those that would have to die because of the desecration of God's Name. But there was a good reason why this man was clad in priestly garments: he was to pass through the city and set a sign upon the forehead of each person who deserved to be saved because God could still count him as His own. Those that did not bear this sign were doomed to death; they were marked by the stylus in blood (*שְׁבַח שָׁם*).

The messenger of God in the white linen garments proved to be the angel of life as well as of death. **מֶלֶךְ הַרְחִים** (King of the Merciful) asked that he function, first and foremost, as the angel of life. (This thought may perhaps be expressed by the singular suffix **כָּתוּב** (which, however, is read as if it were the usual plural suffix **כָּתוּבוּ** (Kury); a similar textual variant occurs also in I Samuel 2,10: **עַל־בְּשֻׂמִּים יַרְפֵּם**).

The **מֶלֶךְ** was directed to go **בְּתַחַת הַעִיר** to seek out those that might be saved. This passage vividly recalls the **צַדִּיקִים** **בְּחֹק הַעִיר** whom Abraham hoped to find in the evil city of Sodom and whose presence he wished to cite in his plea to God for the city's survival. Like the **צַדִּיקִים** to be sought by the messenger of God, the **צדיקים** sought by Abraham were to be not merely **"בְּעִיר"** ("in the city") but **בְּתַחַת הַעִיר** ("in the midst of the city"). Abraham's ideal was "in the midst of, and actively in touch with, all the people and affairs around him. He never ceases to admonish, teach, warn, edify and save whenever and wherever he can do so. He is concerned about everything and everyone, and he tirelessly seeks to bring about improvement in those around him, no matter how small his prospects of success" (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 18,24).

Here, **בְּתַחַת הַעִיר** was to seek men **הַנְּאָנָחִים** who still sighed when they considered all the abomination around them. (**הַגָּזָה**, lit., "the reaction of a man who has been deeply hurt in his own person; i.e., sighing, groaning," cf. Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 2,23). The men to be singled out for survival were not to be individuals who simply removed themselves from the apostasy in the midst of which they dwelt but people who viewed this apostasy as their own most personal concern. They were not merely to be **בְּעִיר**, content to withdraw into a corner, deeming themselves too weak to do more than save their own persons. Instead, they were to be men who remained **בְּתַחַת הַעִיר**, feeling personally responsible for the apostasy and duty bound to do everything within their power to save their fellow Jews, no matter how much they themselves **בָּרְאָשׂוּ** (related to **בָּרֵךְ**, "to choke") might suffer as a result. These were to be men who cried out in despair as if their own lives were in danger, because they felt that every breath they drew was poisoned as long as

all the abominations which occur  
in their midst.

5. But to them He had spoken  
before my ears: Pass through the  
city after him and strike down; let  
your eye not be sparing and show  
no mercy.

והנְּאֶנְקִים עַל כָּל-הַתְּעוּבֹת  
הַגְּנַשׁוֹת בְּתוֹכָה:

וְלֹאֲלֵה אָמַר בָּאָזְנֵי עֲבָרוֹ בָּעֵיר  
אַפְּרִיוֹן הַכּוֹעֵל-תְּלֻם עַיְנִיכֶם וְאַל-  
תִּחְמַלְוּ:

אַל קָרֵי. עַיְנָכֶם קָרֵי.

the air they breathed was polluted by the stench of death arising from the life around them. וְחוּרָה (to make a sign). According to our Sages (שְׁבַת שְׁבַת), the sign which was placed on the foreheads of those that were to be saved was the letter ה: חַיָּה חַי קְטוּת. It could be used either as a mark of life or a mark of death. The stylus served as a tool to inscribe a man for life, but whenever the writer's arm paused, the sword took over, engraving the same sign as a sign of death upon its victim. According to another explanation, the letter ה was meant to identify men who were protected by the merits of their forefathers (חַחַן וּכֹת אֶבֶךְ) or who, even after the "credit" left them by their forefathers had been depleted (חַמָּה וּכֹת אֶבֶךְ), were worthy of being saved because of their own good deeds. These were men whom God honored as His own sons (חַוָּתָה שֶׁל הַקָּבָ"ה אַתָּה), because they viewed their lives as one great act of service to the Divine truth or תְּהֻרָה (truth), and faithfully carried out the precepts of God's Torah from beginning to end.

*Verse 5.* Would the city נְבִיא be able to find such men? His hopes are shattered by God's directive to the messengers of destruction. עברו בָּעֵיד אַחֲרֵיו and not אַחֲרֵי; there they may destroy ruthlessly, without mercy, חַוָּתָה שֶׁל הַקָּבָ"ה אַתָּה (קָרֵי). The fact that it was considered necessary to append this addition, prohibiting any mercy, indicates that the order עַל (אֲשֶׁר) refers to those who would seem deserving of compassion because their personal conduct did not appear to warrant such a severe punishment.

The Prophet senses all this (אָמַר בָּאָזְנֵי) and it fills his heart with foreboding: will the נְבִיא be able to find anyone at all who would deserve having the mark of life placed upon his forehead?

**ט: לֹאֲלֵה אָמַר:** In Verse 4, when God dispatches His messenger to perform the work of rescue, the text includes the words רַיְאָמַר הָאֵל. But in the present verse, and again in Verses 7 and 9, there is no express reference to God. מִיחָד שֶׁמֶת עַל הַרְחָה כֹּドֶר שָׂהָר מִיחָד עַל הַסּוֹכָה According to the Sages, this means that God is pleased to link His Name with a favorable decree but reluctant to associate His Name with an evil decree of fate. This implies that the victims of this decree have only themselves to blame for their tragedy.

6. Old man, youth and maiden, child and women slay to utter ruin, but to any man who bears the sign do not come near; and you begin with My Sanctuary—and so they began with the elders who were in front of the House.

7. And He said to them: Defile the House and fill the courtyards with corpses—away! And they moved onwards and struck down in the city.

*Verse 6.* The first to die would be the old who, by virtue of their experience and maturity, could have been expected to stop the apostasy but failed to take action. The next to perish would be the young men and women whose youthful zeal should have inspired them to fight for God's cause. And woe if סח וונשים even the children had been so badly contaminated by the corruption around them that they, too, were no longer worthy of being saved and if Jewish mothers, drawing their own last breath beside the corpses of their children, would have to admit that they had only themselves to blame for the catastrophe that has befallen their little ones.

is the command of God. The work of destruction is to begin with the Sanctuary. According to a comment by the Sages אלחרי מסדר אלוי the first to perish would be the men who strove to fulfill the teachings of God's Law in their own lives but neglected מוכיח ולא מוכיח to admonish and warn the apostates around them. Thus, the first to fall by the sword of the messengers of destruction would be the elders אשר למי הבית who had abandoned the Sanctuary to apostasy, men who had spent their own lives before the House of the Lord, as it were, but who had done nothing to save the House of the Lord from desecration.

*Verse 7.* The corpses of those killed would fill the Sanctuary and its forecourts. Because they stood idly by while took possession of the House of the Lord and its החצרות, where a whole nation should have been educated toward God's nearness, they themselves could be said to have introduced טומאה into the Sanctuary of God. Alas, the Sanctuary no longer fulfills its God-ordained purpose, so that there is no longer any reason to fear that it might be defiled by contact with the bodies of the dead. Under these circumstances, it would be sheer hypocrisy to keep the corpses out of the Temple on grounds of such apprehensions. But let us go on. There are still many victims בעיר awaiting their fate.

וְיָכוּן בֶּחָור וּבְתֻולָּה וּמַטְבֵּחַ  
וּנְשִׁים תִּהְרֹגְנוּ לְמִשְׁחָה תַּעֲלֵמְלָלָה  
אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו הַתּוֹ אַלְתָּבֵשׁ  
וּמַפְקֵדָיו תִּחְלֹל וַיְהִלּוּ בְּאָנָשִׁים  
הַזְּקָנִים אֲשֶׁר לִפְנֵי הַבַּיּוֹת:  
וְיָאִכְרֵב אֶלְיָהָם טְמָא אֶת-הַבַּיּוֹת  
וּמְלֹא אֶת-הַחֲצָרוֹת חֲלֵלִים צָאוּ  
וַיָּצְאُו וְהִכּוּ בָּעִיר:

8. And it was when they thus struck down and only I remained behind that I fell upon my face and cried out and said: O my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, do You wish to destroy all the remnant of Israel when You pour out Your raging fury over Yerushalayim?

9. And He said to me: The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is filled with the guilt of shed blood, and the city is filled with breach of the law, for they said: God has forsaken the earth and God does not see.

10. Therefore, also I, My eye will not be sparing, nor will I have mercy; I have made their head account for their ways.

*Verse 8.* The bodies of the dead are falling round about the Prophet. **ונאשׁאָר אַנְיָה:** He alone is left alive. Note the additional **N** in **נאשׁאָר**, indicating the future tense; i.e. **אַשְׁאָר**. If God's sword will continue to work its vengeance, the Prophet might be the only one to remain alive. Overcome by grief and misery, he utters a loud cry and "falls upon his face." Could **ה**, Who does not cease to be **ה** even when, in His justice, He metes out stern punishment, really desire the destruction of His entire nation? What fate can be in store for שׂוֹרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל if even Jerusalem will succumb to God's flaming wrath?

*Verses 9–10.* God's answer only adds to Ezekiel's despair. The sins committed by the Jewish people have reached full measure. The land is filled with blood and טהָרָה (see **לא חטא מטהָרָה**), injustice reigns supreme in Jerusalem. If the spirit of Divine justice has vanished from society even in Jerusalem, within sight of the Sanctuary, it is only natural that in time every aspect of the nation's life will become corrupt. The cause of this depravity is that the vital awareness of God has been stifled and His hallowing Word has been suppressed within the nation. (see Chapter 8, Verse 12) For only a society which translates God's Word into living reality will be able to banish not only murder but also deceit from its midst. **אִישׁ דְּסִטְתָּו וּמְרָמָה יִחְעַב** (Psalms 5,7).

8. וְיוֹהֵי כְּהֻכּוֹתֶם וּגְנָאשָׁאָר אַנְיָה  
וְאַפְלָה עַל־פָּנֵי וְאַזְעָק וְאַמְרָה  
אֲרָה אֲרָנוּ נִלְוָה הַמְשֻׁחָה אֲתָה  
אַתְּ בְּלִשְׁאָרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּשִׁפְךָ  
אַתְּ יִחְמֹתֶךָ עַל־יְרוּשָׁלָם:

9. וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְיוֹ שׁוֹן בְּיִת־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וַיֹּהֹרֶה גָּדוֹל בְּמַאֲדָר מָאָר וּתְמָלָא  
הַארְצָן רְסִים וְהַעֲיר מְלָאָה מְפָה  
כִּי אָכְרֹז עַזְבָּן יִלְוָה אַתְּ הַאֲרָז  
וְאַזְנָן יִלְוָה לְאָהָה:

10. וְגַם־אָנִי לְאַדְתָּחָסֶם עִינִי וְלָא  
אַחֲמֶל בְּרַכְמֶם בְּרַאֲשֶׁם נְתַתִּי:

11. And behold, the man garbed in linen, who has the scribe's instrument on his loins, brought the answer with the words: I have done as You have commanded me.

**Chap. 10.** 1. And I saw and, behold, above the expanse, over the heads of the Cherubim: . . . as the appearance in the likeness of a throne. . . .

ו. והנה האיש | לבש הכהנים  
אשר הקסת בקתו משביך דבר  
לאמר עשית באשר צויתנו ס

י. ואראה והנה אל-הרכיע  
אשר על-ראש הכהנים קאנו  
ספריר כפראה דמות כסא נראתה  
עליהם:  
כל אשר קרי.

(see Chapter 7, Verse 4). Israel has been guilty of transgressions even more outrageous than those committed by the people of Sodom (*Yalkut*, בָּדָם נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵד בְּסָדוֹם, בְּסָדוֹם נִשְׁתַּחֲוֵד כְּבָדָה טָהָר) In the face of such abominations God can show no mercy. Will the Jewish people share the fate of the people of Sodom?

*Verse 11.* The messenger sent out by ה (Verse 4) to work destruction but at the same time to save all those that have proven worthy of the mark of life has returned from his mission. עשו ככל אשר (קרי) צורני. But has he really been able to act entirely in accordance with God's command? The words בכל אשר (קרי) are replaced by the word בסודר (קרי), which implies that the messenger has been able to carry out his mission only to a limited extent. When God sent out His messenger, He expected that the latter would find many people worthy of having the mark of God placed on their foreheads and thus of being saved. But when the messenger returns from his mission it becomes clear that he has walked through a whole field covered with corpses: we are told that נוג, "the tool," hung suspended from his waist, but the word חוטף is missing. This means that the writer's tool turned into a bloody sword in the messenger's hand. Will Israel share the fate of the people of Sodom?

**Chapter 10.** Atonement had been made for the desecrated Sanctuary. The wickedness that defiled it had vanished from its halls. All that remains is dead silence. But God is the last to leave the chambers that are so dear to Him. Anyone reading this chapter, or even only the passages accessible to his own limited understanding, in all their graphic, vivid detail will be able to feel the bitter pain inherent in the concept of סלוך שכינה.

Other cherubim are already waiting for the throne of God's glory to stretch above them (Verse 1). These are the מִנְחָה which the Prophet beheld at the river K'var (Verse 20). The present chapter refers to them as cherubim; they replace the cherubim who until then had been stationed above the אַרְכָּן as the bearers of God's glory. Israel had refused to act as the cherubim of God, but God has

2. And He said to the man garbed in linen: . . . and fill your hands with fire coals from among the Cherubim and throw them upon the city; and he came before my eyes.

וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־הָאִישׁ | לְבָשֵׂ  
הַכְּרוּם וַיֹּאמֶר בָּאֵל־  
בְּנֵינוֹת נְגִנְגֵל אֶל־תְּקַחַת לְפִרְבוֹ  
וּמְלָא חָפְנָךְ גַּחֲלִירָאשׁ מִבְּנֹוֹת  
לְכָרְבִּים זָוְלָק עַל־הַעֲדָר וַיָּבֹא  
לְעִינֵּי:

3. And the Cherubim are already standing to the right of the House when the man came along, but the cloud filled the inner courtyard.

וְהַכְּרָבִים עַמְּרוּם מִימְּן לְבָוֹת  
בְּכָל־אֹהֶן וְהַעֲנוֹן מָלָא אַת־  
הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית:

4. Then the glory of God rose up from above the Cherub toward the threshold of the House; and the

וַיָּרַם כְּבָדְיוֹתָה מִעַל הַכְּרָבִים  
עַל מִפְּתָן הַבָּיִת וַיָּמֻלָּא הַבָּיִת

other cherubim available to serve this purpose. The innumerable forces that fill the universe of Creation rustle their wings (Verse 5), ready to serve the Word of God. From their wingbeat doing homage to God we can hear כל אל בברכו (Shdei Sinai) (Verse 5) God's timeless message from Sinai. But the God of Israel still cannot tear Himself away from His Sanctuary (Verse 4).

The Prophet is to see even more. The Divine messenger clad in linen garments, who strove in vain to accomplish his mission of rescue, has received new instructions. He had performed his work of destruction while clad in his white linen garments. This implies that even the harshest blows of fate are acts of God's love and mercy. At times man can sink to depths of depravity at which only total annihilation can clear the way for a new and better future.

Now, standing amidst the cherubim, the נָגֵן is commanded to fill his hands with fiery coals which he is to fling out over the doomed city (Verse 2). There are new cherubim waiting to do eternal homage to God; Israel is free to join these cherubim if only it wishes to do so.

The messenger of God does not have to pick up the fiery coals in his own hands; one of the cherubim will hand them to him (Verse 7). Anyone wishing to see homage done to God, anyone still imbued with the spirit of the cherubim must welcome the downfall of a city that has forfeited its Divine identity. But does this consideration not imply a mitigation of the harsh fate that God ordained for His people? גַּזְעָנוּ מִידּוֹ שֶׁכּוּרְבָּן שֶׁל גַּבְּרִיאָל־יְהִוָּה. (Hence hence נָהָלָא אַשׁ (Verse 6) is presented in a mitigated form as (Verse 2).

House was filled with the cloud,  
and the courtyard was filled with  
the radiance of God's glory.

5. . .

6. It was then that He com-  
manded the man garbed in linen:  
Take fire . . . from between the  
Cherubim. . . .

את־הענן והחצ'ר מלאה את־  
גָּתָה בְּבָרֶךָ וּרוּחָה:  
וְקוֹל בְּגִפְעַל הַכְּרוּבִים נִשְׁמַע עָרֵךְ  
הַחצ'ר הַחִיצָנָה קָכוֹל אֶל־שְׁנִי  
כְּרָבְרוֹךְ:  
וַיֹּהֵי בָּצֹותָנוּ אֶת־הָאֵישׁ לְבָשָׂר  
הַפְּרִים לְאָמֵר קָח אֲשֶׁר מִבְּנֵינוּת  
לְגַלְגָּל מִבְּנֵינוּת לְכָרוּבִים וַיַּכְלֵא  
וַיַּעֲמֹד אֶצְלַת הַאוֹפָן:

(Verse 2): The Divine messenger is drawing near to carry out the Divine command. The cherubim are waiting at the right-hand side of the House of the Lord, i.e., the side of the בְּנֵרֶה, which gave access to the סְכִינָה (Verse 3). But the סְכִינָה of God is still waiting inside the Sanctuary. As in the days of past glory (I Kings 8, 10) the cloud that announces the presence of the סְכִינָה (see Exodus 33, 9–10) still fills the chambers of the יְהוָה. But have we not been told in Chapter 9, Verse 3 that the סְכִינָה had already withdrawn from the cherub of the יְהוָה to the threshold of the gate at the time the messenger had received his first instructions? It seems as if the סְכִינָה of God has returned just one more time, the cloud of its nearness filling the יְהוָה just once more, for one last parting look at the forecourt bathed in the radiance of Divine splendor (Verse 4) before its final reluctant departure from the precious chambers. It "kisses the walls and envelops the pillars in one last tearful embrace," these walls and these pillars that had sheltered what once had been the place of peace and of the glory of God (פסוקטא).

בְּבָד אֶלְקִי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Chapter 9, Verse 3) is departing from the Sanctuary of its people who no longer conducted their lives in accordance with God's expectations (אלקיות). Nevertheless, כְּבָד הַ (Chapter 10, Verse 4) seems unable to tear itself away from the threshold of the Sanctuary.

But then, finally, the glory of God does indeed depart even from the threshold of the Sanctuary and enters into the midst of its new cherubim that have been eagerly awaiting its coming (Verse 18). They rise from the ground and spread their wings to serve as bearers of "the glory of the God of Israel" (Verse 19).

Who is not moved at the thought that God, יְשָׁב הַכְּרוּבִים (Psalms 99,1), must enter into the midst of these cherubim

7. Then the Cherub stretched out his hand from between the Cherubim to the fire which was between the Cherubim; he lifted it up and placed it into the hands of the one garbed in linen; he took it and went.

8-17...

וַיִּשְׁלַח הַכֶּרְבּוֹד אֶת־יְדָוָ מִבְּנֵוֹת  
לְכֶרְבּוֹדִים אֶל־הָאָשָׁר אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵוֹת  
הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים וַיֵּשֶׁא וַיָּמָנוּ אֶל־חַפְנֵי  
לְגַם הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים וַיַּחֲזַק וַיַּצָּא:

8. וַיָּנָא לְכֶרְבּוֹדִים תְּבִנִית יְרִאָם  
תְּחִתָּת כְּנֵפֶיהָם:

9. לְאֹופְנִים לְהָם קֹרֵא הַגְּלָלֶל  
בְּאֹנוֹגִי:

10. וְאֶרֶבֶעָה פְנִים לְאַתָּר פְנִי  
הַאֲחֶר פְנִי הַכֶּרְבּוֹד וְפְנִי הַשְׁנִי  
פְנִי אָרֶם וְהַשְׁלִישִׁי פְנִי אַרְיָה  
וְהַרְבִּיעִי פְנִירִינְשָׁר:

11. וַיַּלְמֹד הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים הַיָּה הַחַיָּה  
אֲשֶׁר דָּאַתִּי בְּנַהֲרִיכָּרָה:

12. וּבְלִכְתַּת הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים יָלְכוּ  
הַאֹופְנִים אֶצְלָם וּבְשָׁאַת הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים  
אֶת־בְּנֵפֶיךָם לְרוֹם מַעַל הָאָרֶץ  
לְאַיְשָׁבוּ הַאֹופְנִים גַּסְיָם:

13. מִאֶצְלָם:  
14. בְּעַמְךָם יָעִמְדוּ וּבְרוֹקָם יָרֻמוּ  
אָתָּם כִּי רַיִם הַמִּנְהָה בָּהֶם:

9. וְאֶרֶתֶה וְהָנָה אֶרֶבֶעָה אֹופְנִים  
אֲצֶל הַכֶּרְבּוֹדִים אָפָן אַחֲר אֲצֶל

הַכֶּרְבּוֹד אַחֲר וְאָפָן אַחֲר אֲצֶל  
הַכֶּרְבּוֹד אַחֲר וְמִרְאַת הַאֹופְנִים  
בְּעֵין אַבָּן טְרַשְׁישׁ:

10. זְמַרְאַיָּהּ רַמּוֹת אַחֲר  
לְאֶרֶבֶעָהּ כַּאֲשֶׁר וְהָנָה הָאָפָן  
בְּתוֹךְ הָאֹופָן:

11. בְּלִכְתַּם אֶל־אֶרֶבֶעָת רַבְעִיָּהּ  
יָלְכוּ לֹא יָסְבוּ בְּלִכְתַּם כִּי הַפְּלָקָם  
אֲשֶׁר־יָפַנָּה הַרְאָש אַתָּנוּ וְלֹכְדָה  
לֹא יָסְבוּ בְּלִכְתַּם:

12. וּבְלִכְשָׂרָם גַּבְלָם וּוּרִיקָם  
וּבְנֵפֶיךָם וְהַאֹופְנִים מְלָאִים עִינָם  
סְבִיב לְאֶרֶבֶעָהּ אֹופְנִיהם:

because His people no longer turned their own "cherubim wings" toward Him, and drove Him away from His dwelling place in *their* midst?

As the Prophet witnesses these tragic events, he is shaken to the depths of his soul. Looking more closely, he recognizes the cherubim; they are the *children* of the God of Israel from the river K'var (Verses 15 and 20)! The *children* from the river K'var were the same cherubim

18. And then the glory of God departed from the threshold of the House and stood above the Cherubim.

19. And the Cherubim lifted up their wings and rose up from the earth before my eyes—and He stood at the entrance of the eastern gate of the House of God; and the glory of the God of Israel was over them, up high.

20. It was the Chaya which I had seen beneath the God of Israel at the river K'var; then I recognized that these were Cherubim.

21-22. . . .

22. וּרְמֹתָה פָנִים כַּפֶה הַפְנִים  
אֲשֶׁר רָאָתִי עַל־גְּרִיכָבָר  
סְרָאֵיכֶם וְאַתֶּם אִישׁ אֶל־עַבְרָ  
פָנָיו יָלְכָה

**Chap. 11.** 1. And the spirit raised me and brought me to the eastern gate of the House of God which was facing to the east

. וַיֵּצֵא כָבָד וְרוּהַ מַעַל מִפְתָח  
הַבַּיִת וַיַּעֲמֹד עַל־הַכְּרוּבִים:

19. וַיֵּשְׂאוּ הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־כֶּנֶף־וּם  
וַיַּרְמוּ מִן־הָאָרֶץ לְעֵינֵי בְּצָאתָם  
וְהַאֲופָנִים לְעַמְתָם וַיַּעֲמֹד פָּתָח  
שַׁעַר בֵּית־דָוָה הַקְרָמָנוּי וּכְבוֹד  
אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־יְהוָה סְלָמָעָלה:

20. וַיָּאֵן הַתִּנְהָא אֲשֶׁר רָאָתִי תְּחִתָּה  
אֱלֹהֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּגַנְּרִיכָבָר וְאֶל־עַ  
קִי כְּרוּבִים הַמְּפֻהָה:

21. אַרְכָּעָה אַרְכָּעָה פְנִים לְאַחֲרָ  
וְאַרְכָּעָה כְּנָפִים לְאַחֲרָ וּרְמֹתָה וּבָנִי  
אַרְם תְּחִתָּה כֶּנֶפיּוּם:

יא. וְתַשְׁאֵ אֶתְךָ רָוח וְתַקְאֵ אֶתְךָ  
אֶל־שַׁעַר בֵּית־דָוָה הַקְרָמָנוּי  
הַפּוֹנֶה קָרִיפָה וְהַגָּה בְּפִתְחָה

he beholds here. A faint ray of hope brightens his gloom. He looks once more to make certain that these were indeed the same creatures אשר רָאָתִי צְלָמָנוּ—(Verse 22): Now he knows that, borne upon the wings of these cherubim, God will follow His people even into exile. He has not ceased to be and eagerly awaits the moment when Israel will re-enter the ranks of these cherubim as the foremost cherub of them all.

**Chapter 11, Verse 1.** Standing at the entrance of the הַכָּל (Chapter 8, Verse 16), to which the glory of God had led him, the Prophet witnessed the worst excesses of moral degeneration, inevitable results of the people's rebellion

and, behold, at the entrance of the gate (there were) twenty-five men; among them I saw Yaazanya, son of Azur, and Pelatyahu, son of Benayahu, princes of the people.

השער עשרים וחמשה איש  
ואראה בתוכם אתייאוניה בז'  
עוז ועתיפלתיו ברפנירז  
שני העם: פ

against the teachings of the Torah and their worship of nature. In Chapter 8 we were told that the Prophet had seen "about 25 men" worshipping the "almighty" sun, men who had only ridicule for the Sanctuary and for the moral standards it symbolized. From that place he had witnessed the catastrophe that was about to overtake the Sanctuary and the city of Jerusalem. It was from there that the Prophet accompanied God's *שכינה* on its tragic departure from the chambers of the Sanctuary. This experience, upon the wings of the *spirits of all kinds*, as it were, enabled him to see events that were still in the future. However, he was not to depart from Jerusalem without first having dwelt as a *nabi* in the midst of a society doomed to destruction. The *nabi* of the *golah* was to see himself in the place of his contemporary, the Prophet Jeremiah, the better to appreciate the challenges that would await him in the *golah*. The *שכינה* of God had already withdrawn to "the entrance to the eastern gate of the House of the Lord" (Chapter 10, Verse 19). It was to this place that the spirit of God now moved the Prophet.

At the entrance to the eastern gate, the *הטונה קידמה*, "that faced east," Ezekiel encounters 25 men among whom he recognizes a number of leading personalities. We can assume that the seemingly redundant emphasis on the place, *שער*, *בית* ה' הקדמוני *הטונה קידמה* (קדושים עב:) that this was the same group of 25 men who had participated in the revolting cult of sun worship at the eastern entrance to the *היכל*. But note that in Chapter 8, Verse 16, we read that *מניהם קרייה*, their faces were turned eastward, while in the present chapter the text reads: *הטונה קידמה*; the men were stationed at the eastern entrance to the Sanctuary. Our text does not refer to an act of active sun worship; nevertheless, the attitude they display as leaders, in the midst of the people reflects an outlook on life shaped by the worship of nature and its forces, the notion of the supremacy of blind physical forces to the exclusion of all moral considerations.

In the earlier passage (Chapter 8, Verse 16), Ezekiel is shown beholding *עשרים וחמשה איש*, "about 25 men;" the present passage speaks of *עשרים וחמשה איש* "25 men," an exact number. In the earlier passage the eye of the Prophet was riveted to the abominable spectacle of sun worship so that the exact number of men in the group seemed to him a matter of relative indifference.

2. And He said to me: Son of mankind, these are the men who plot wrongdoing and who counsel evil advice in this city:

3. Who say: (The time is) not near to build houses—it is the kettle, we are the flesh!

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי בָנְאָמִים אֵלֶה  
הָאָנָשִׁים הַחַשְׁכִּים אָנוּ וְנִיעְצִים  
עַצְתְּרֹעַ בְּעַרְתָּה זוֹאת:

3. הַאֲמָרִים לֹא בְּקָרְבֵּן תְּבִתִּים  
הִיא הַסּוֹר וְאֶנְחָנוּ הַבָּשָׂר:

In the present passage, by contrast, he notes that he is in the midst of a group of outstanding personalities, each one a distinguished figure in his own right. Thus the precise number is important.

*Verses 2–3.* These were the same men who had undermined the effectiveness of Jeremiah's warnings and had reacted to Jeremiah's predictions of impending doom with no more than a condescending smile. They were *הַשְׁבִּים עַזָּה* (*עַזָּה*=the abuse of *עַזָּה*, the power bestowed on man; see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 35,18). They have forgotten long ago that the power of any state must be measured in terms of the moral standards set by God. They believe that the *עַזָּה* (what a miserable *עַזָּה*!) of the state is sufficiently secured by the favor of the "deities of nature." Therefore their plans would serve the true welfare of the state; the results of their deliberations would be nothing like those suggested by the utterances of Jeremiah that verged on downright treason. How dared that man say that the state was doomed to collapse and that the remnants of the people that would survive the destruction would have to rebuild their lives on alien soil and under alien rulers. Why, Jeremiah had even drawn up guidelines for this purpose in a "Book to the *Golah*" (Jeremiah, Chapter 29), starting with the call *בְּנֵי חַיִם וּגְרוּ* (Verse 5), that his people should build new homes for themselves far away from their own homeland! Well, the leaders of the state could tell themselves that they had left no stone unturned to brand as high treason this call to rebuild. They had done their utmost to eliminate this dangerous "enemy" of the state (see Jeremiah 26–28). The state, so they thought, was stable and strong; what faintheartedness, then, though the state might indeed be faced with serious threats, was it to conclude and proclaim that the state was about to perish! *לֹא בְּקָרְבֵּן!* We have not yet reached that point. Jerusalem, firm and strong, is like a "kettle" made of solid metal, perfectly capable of sheltering the "meat" within it from the fire that surrounds it. (The same allegory occurs also in Jeremiah 1,13 and, in even greater, moving detail in Chapter 24 of the Book of Ezekiel; see also Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 12,8).

4. Therefore, pronounce your prophetic word over them, pronounce your prophetic word, son of mankind.

5. Then the spirit of God overwhelmed me and said to me: Say, thus has God spoken: Thus you have spoken, house of Israel, and the thoughts arising in your mind I have recognized.

6. Those slain by your hand you have accumulated in this city; it is you [who] have filled its streets with the slain.

7. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Your slain ones which you have placed in

א. **לְכָן הַנֶּבֶא עֲלֵיכֶם הַנֶּבֶא בָּזֶה**  
בָּן אָרֶם:

ב. וַתִּפְלֶל עַל־רُוח וְלֹהֶה וַיַּאֲמַדֵּר אֶלְיוֹן  
אָמַר כְּה־אָמַר וְלֹהֶה בָּן אָמְרוֹת  
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וּמְעֻלּוֹת רַוַּחַקְמָן אָגִי  
יְרֻעָתֶיהָ:

ג. **הַרְבִּים חֲלֵיכֶם בָּעִיר הַזֹּאת**  
וּמְלָאָתֶם חֹצֶתֶיהָ חָלֵל: פ

ד. **לְכָן כְּה־אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי רֹהֶה**  
חֲלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר שְׁקַטְתֶם בְּתוֹךְהָ

*Verse 4.* It is within this group of men that Ezekiel sees his role as a Prophet. Where Jeremiah's warnings fell on deaf ears, Ezekiel, as *בן ארם*, the herald of man's hopes for a better future, will preach the Word of God.

*Verse 5.* God has not only heard the impudent words of the leaders but also perceived the attitude which these words reflect (see Verse 2). For God is *הָאֵל דְּרוֹתָה* (I Samuel 2,3).

*טָעַלְתָּו*, literally, "that which arises within your own mind."

*Verses 6–12.* The men have assumed an awesome responsibility. When at the hour of Divine judgment, the city of Jerusalem will be filled with the corpses of the slain, these will be *their* slain. The dead will be on *their* conscience. Jerusalem will then indeed be a kettle; however, it will only shelter the dead. What incredible irony—those who are to blame for the catastrophe will not enjoy even this sad privilege. They feared the sword (Verse 8) but thought they would be safe from it behind the fortified walls of their metropolis. But they will not be able to escape their fate. They will meet their end far away from their capital, at the border of their country (according to Rashi, in Riblah; cf. Jeremiah 39,5). They will be slaughtered by an enemy drunk with his victory. They had eliminated God from their live-

her midst, they shall be the flesh  
and she the kettle—but as for you:  
Away from her!

**הנֹזְיאָ מִתּוֹכֶה:**

8. The sword you have feared, and the sword I will bring upon you, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

8. חֶרְבָּן יְרַאֲתָם וְחֶרְבָּן אָבִיא  
עַלְיכֶם נָאֵם אָלָנִי יְהוָה:

9. I will lead you out from her midst and give you into the hands of strangers, and I carry out punishing justice against you.

וְהוֹצָאַתִּי אֶתְכֶם מִתֹּוךְהָנֶגֶת  
אֶתְכֶם בִּרְדּוֹנִים וְעַשְׂתִּי בְּכֶם  
שְׁפָטוּמָה:

10. You fall by the sword; at the border of Israel I will pass judgment on you, that you will recognize that I am God.

10. בתרב תפלו על-גבול ישראל  
ਆשפות אתם וידעתם כי-אני  
ה'.

11. She will not be a kettle for you, and you still want to be meat in it? To Israel's borders! that I bring you to judgment.

... היה לא-תתני לך לפיר  
אתם תהנו בתוקה לך שר אל-  
גובל וישראל אשפט אתכם;  
... וירעטם בראני יהוה אשר  
בכחך לא בלבכם ומשפטך לא  
עשיתם ובמשפטך הגוים אשר

**12.** And thus you will recognize that I am God in Whose laws you did not walk and Whose statutes you did not fulfill, but you rather acted according to the statutes of the nations that surround you.

**סְכִינּוֹתֶיכֶם עֲשִׂיתָם:**

13. Then it was while I spoke my prophetic word that Pelatyahu,

and thought they could cast aside His word with impunity, and now their fate will serve only to confirm the warnings of His **מֹתָן** which they should have heeded in time.

The statutes of moral law (**ורוח**) ordained by God are the only possible basis for the social and judicial relationships (**בְּרִית**) that can guarantee the survival of individuals and nations alike. But the blueprint of these leaders for the structure of the state was based on **תָּמִיד וְנֶר לֵא** (**פסח טהרה נור לֵא**, cf. **טעהן גורם**, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 18, 1-5).

**Verse 13.** The Prophet had not yet finished delivering his message (דִּבְרָנוֹתִי) when one of the leaders in his audience suddenly collapsed and died. The

son of Benaya died—and I fell upon my face and cried out in a loud voice and said: O, my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, will You bring destruction upon the remnant of Israel?

**14.** Then the word of God came to me:

**15.** Son of mankind, your brothers, your brothers are the men to

בְּנָה מֵת וַיַּפְלֹל עַל־פָּנִי וְאוֹעֶק  
כּוֹל־גָּרוֹל וְאָמַר אֲלֵה אַרְגֵּן יְהוָה  
כְּלָה אַתָּה עָשָׂה אֶת שְׁאָרִית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל פ

**14.** וְיָהִי רְבִרְיוֹנָה אֲלֵי לְאָמָר:

**15.** קָדוֹם אַתָּךְ אֲחִיךְ אָנֹשֵׁי

Divine prophecy that had just predicted the fate which would befall them sometime in the future, a prophecy to which the leaders reacted with the impudent words **לא בקרוב בנוות בחם** (Verse 3), had come true even at that moment, without any warning, in the case of at least one of them. In one instant, a man who had just boasted of his invincible strength has been struck down by God. If the words of a prophet can kill, if they can put such a sudden end to the life of one man, could they not put just as swift an end to a whole country, even one that considers itself safe from all danger on its own soil? Under the impact of this terrifying demonstration of human impotence and God's almighty power, the Prophet falls upon his face. What overwhelms him is not any thought of his own strength but the triumphant power of the Word of God, which he has resolved to serve at the sacrifice of his own personal independence (Chapter 1, Verse 28). What could prevent God from destroying all of **שְׁאָרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל** in one moment, and if this catastrophe came to pass, who could see even in this act of destruction anything else but the eternal love of God, albeit clothed in the garments of punitive justice? Perhaps 'א' ה', God in His quality of mercy, considers the destruction of **שְׁאָרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל** as the only way of enabling the advent of a healthy future for all mankind? And when such thoughts assailed the Prophet, was it not only natural that he should cry out before God in utter woe, not for the death of Pelathiah who had only received his just punishment, but out of distress, demanding to know from God whether the whole people of Israel would suffer the same fate as that one man?

**Verse 14.** The Prophet is then given to hear the following words of God which all his recent experiences on holy ground enabled him to fathom in their profound significance.

**Verse 15.** Even if all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the rest of the Jews who had remained in the homeland after the deportation of Jeconiah were suddenly to be destroyed, it would not be the end of **שְׁאָרִית יִשְׂרָאֵל**. Henceforth, Ezekiel is to find his brethren, his true brethren, among those to whom he

whom you are to bring deliverance, and the whole house of Israel in its entirety, to whom, alas, the inhabitants of Yerushalayim have said: Move away from God, the land remains ours, given as an inheritance!

16. Therefore say, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice:

גָּאֵלֶתֶךְ וְכָל־בָּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּלֶה  
אֲשֶׁר אָסַרְוּ לָהֶם יְשֻׁבֵּן וּרוֹשָׁלָם  
רְחָקָוּ מַעַל וְהַרְהָרָה לְנוּ הַיָּא נְתַנָּה  
הָאָרֶץ לְכוּרָשָׁה: ס

לְבָנָן אָמַר בַּה־אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי  
יְלֹהָה בְּיַדְךָ תְּרַחְקָתִים בְּגּוּיִם וּבְיִ

will have to bring the message of deliverance and resurrection. This includes not only the *golah* in the narrow sense of the term but also all the dispersed members of the people of Israel who have been wandering through the world leaderless ever since the collapse of the Northern Kingdom. To all of these the Prophet must act as an advocate—in the name of God. They are all his brothers; let him therefore be their advocate (*גָּאֵל*) in God's name.

The "inhabitants of Jerusalem," in their blindness, were indifferent to the fate of their unfortunate brethren in dispersion; in their eyes the exiles had forfeited their prospects for a better future because they had left their homeland. The Book of Jeremiah (Chapters 28 and 29) recorded the desperate efforts of these Jerusalemites to discredit Jeremiah in the eyes of the population, to strengthen the confidence of those that had remained in the homeland and, in blatant misuse of God's Name, to insist that the only hope for the exiles lay in their speedy return to the homeland. We know how they deliberately misconstrued the concept of *הַרְחָקָוּ מַעַל*, asserting that any attempt to interpret the *galuth* as the will of God constituted an act of "withdrawal from God." The state and its supposed instruments of power were idolized as the surest protection against all danger. And all these notions were presented to their brothers in Jerusalem as if they were the Words of God.

But the Prophet had witnessed the *סָלֹק שְׁכִינָה* with his own eyes. Let them cling until the very last moment to the soil that had expelled them long ago; eventually they will have to pay for their folly with sufferings that will bring them close to destruction (see Jeremiah, Chapter 24). *רְחָקָוּ* is an imperative form.

*Verse 16.* לְבָנָן: Let the Prophet bring this message to his brethren in dispersion: The purpose of *galuth* is not to scatter the Jewish people and to send them far away from God but to unite them around God and His Sanctuary. God will remain close to them and will dwell in the midst of all those remnants

Even while I send them far off among the nations and disperse them to the lands, I shall become for them a small Sanctuary in the lands whither they have come.

17. Therefore say, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: I shall gather you in from the nations, and I shall unite you from the lands in whose midst you are dispersed, and I shall restore to you the soil of Israel.

הַפִּיצוֹתִים בָּאָרֶצֶת וְאָנוּ לְהַמְּקֻנֵשׁ מִשְׁטָן בָּאָרֶצֶת אֲשֶׁר־  
בְּאוֹ שֵׁם:

17. לְכָנוּ אָמַר כִּי־אָמַר אֶלְנִי  
יְהֹוָה וּקְבָצָתִי אֶתְכֶם מִזְרָעָפִים  
[אַסְפָּתִי אֶתְכֶם מִזְרָעָה אָרֶצֶת אֲשֶׁר־  
נִפְצֹתֶם בָּהָם וְנִתְּחַי לְכֶם אֶת־  
אָרֶקֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

of His people who, no matter where they may be scattered, will rally around His eternal truth. The presence of God in their midst will assure these exiles of a "Sanctuary on a smaller scale" (*מגילה*, טקדש פס על ביה נסיות וכח מדרשות, *מגילה*) wherever they may dwell.

The Prophet had witnessed the desecration of the Sanctuary in Zion and its resulting destruction. Now it is his mission to gather the building bricks shaped in the *galuth* (טקדש פס) in order to erect the Sanctuary of the future that will endure forever. The term פס is the opposite not only of the adjective "many" but also of "great" (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 107,39).

*Verse 17.* Even as they must be far away from their homeland in order to regain the nearness of God, so they must dwell among alien peoples under alien rulers in order to earn anew the right to their own sacred soil. Those who adamantly cling to the soil of their homeland, saying (Verse 15), have forgotten that ארץ ישראל is not meant to be only but also. It will tolerate Israel's presence upon it only as long as that nation will preserve the character of the land as the sacred soil of man, dedicated to the fulfillment of Israel's God-ordained destiny (see Chapter 6). *לֹך:* When the exiles will have regained God's nearness (the concept of this nearness is indicated by the change from the third person plural in Verse 16 to the more direct form of address, the second person plural, in Verse 17), God will gather His people from among the alien nations (קְבִּץ is "a physical gathering of people"; Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,1). But this physical gathering must go hand in hand with אָסִיבָה, a spiritual "ingathering." While they are scattered in the diaspora (דִּיסְפּוֹרָה is a *niph'al*, passive perfect form), they must eliminate everything foreign to their Divinely charted destiny and close ranks also in spirit around the Sanctuary of life they all share in common. That is the meaning of אָסִיבָה.

**18.** And when they return home, they will remove from it all its horrors and all its abominations.

18. זָכַר אֶת־שְׁמָהּ וְהַסִּירוּ אֶת־  
כָּל־שְׁקוֹאֵת וְאֶת־כָּל־תְּעֻבּוֹתָה  
מִמֶּנָּה:

**19.** And to them I shall give a unified heart and a new spirit I shall give into their innermost; I shall remove the heart of stone from their flesh and I shall give them a heart of flesh.

19. וְנַתְּנֵי לְהֶם לֵב אֶחָד וְרוּחַ  
חֲרֵשָׁה אֲתָנוּ בְּקָרְבָּם וְנַסְרֵתִי לֵב  
הַאֲכָנוּ מִבְּשָׂרָם וְנַתְּנֵי לְהֶם לֵב  
בָּשָׂרָה:

**20.** So that they walk in My laws and heed My statutes and fulfill them, and thus they shall be a people to Me, and I shall be God to them.

20. לְמַעַן בְּחַקְתִּי יֵלְכוּ וְאַתָּה  
מְשֻׁפְטֵי יִשְׁמְרוּ וְעַשְׂוֵו אֶתָּם וְרוּחַ  
לְיַעַם וְאֱגִיא אֱהִיה לְהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים:

**21.** But when their heart goes after their horrors and their abominations, I will have their head account for their ways, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

21. וְאֶל־לְבָבָם שְׁקוֹצִוָּה  
וְתְּעֻבּוֹתָם לְבָם הַלְּךָ דָּרְכָם  
בְּרָאָשָׁם נַתְּנֵי נָאָם אַרְגֵּן יְהֹוָה:

(see Hirsch Commentary, *ibid*). Only if they have done this will their return to their homeland be a true return to **ארdem ישראל**.

*Verse 18.* When they return, their most important task will be to keep away from their land anything that might rob the soil of its holy, Divine identity.

*Verse 19.* Then only one heart will beat within them, **לב כָּשָׁד**, a heart receptive to all things Divine. They will no longer have that heavy, inert heart of stone which formerly weighed down their heart of flesh and blood, slowing its pulse until it ceased to beat for God and His Law.

*Verse 20.* They will return home with the high resolve to remain ever mindful of God's renewed, eternal admonition which they must obey in order to remain in possession of the land forever (*Leviticus 18, 1-5* and *24-28*). Then the bond between God and His people will endure forever.

*Verse 21.* This is the work of spiritual rescue (*Verse 15*) to which the Prophet must now devote his efforts. But as for those who persisted in remaining on the desecrated soil, who insisted on allowing their hearts to be ruled by their "hearts of stone," the hearts that were turned toward **שְׁקוֹצִים** until their own shriveled **לב כָּשָׁד** had atrophied altogether beneath the weight of **אבן** (this is the meaning of **לב אַבְן**), they will suffer

**22.** Then the Cherubim lifted up their wings and the Ofanim were facing them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them, above.

**23.** And the glory of God raised itself away from the midst of the city and came to stand still on the mountain, to the east of the city.

**24.** And the spirit carried me aloft and brought me to Chaldea to the *golah*, in a manifestation through the spirit of God: and the vision that I had seen raised itself away from me.

**25.** And I spoke to the *golah* all the words of God which He had let me see.

וַיִּשְׁאָו הַכְּרוּבִים אֶת־כְּנֹפִים  
וְהַאוֹפְנִים לְעַמְתָם וּכְבוֹד אֱלֹהִי־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲלֵיכֶם מִלְמֹעֲלָה:

וַיַּעַל כְּבוֹד יְהוָה מִלְעָל תֻּךְ  
הַעֲרָר וַיַּעֲמֹד עַל־הַר אֲשֶׁר מִקְרָם  
לְעִיר:

וּרוּחַ נְשָׁאתִי וְתִבְיאַנִי  
בְּשִׁידִימָה אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה בְּמִרְאַה  
בְּרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים וְעַל מַעַל הַפְּרָאָה  
אֲשֶׁר רָאָתִי

וְאֶרְכֵר אֶל־הַגּוֹלָה אֶת כָּל־  
רַבְּרִי וְהַרְהָרָה אֲשֶׁר הָרָאָנוּ פָ

the fate they deserve (درכם בראותם נתתי) while the exiles, who are far from home, will be able to look forward to their renascence as a nation.

*Verses 22–23.* Ezekiel witnessed the next phase of סלולק שכינה: he sees the cherubim lifting up their wings and God's departing from the city, thus finally dooming it to destruction. But the *scenia* makes one more brief stop in the east of the city (according to Rashi, it was on the Mount of Olives) for one last sad gaze of farewell before the long separation begins; (hence the juxtaposition of בכבודך and בכבוד אליך ישראל, as in Chapter 10, Verse 4). But the Prophet knows the place to which the cherubim are escorting the *scenia* of God.

*Verses 24–25.* This is the end of the Prophet's momentous experience. He went back to live in Chaldea, in the midst of the *golah* to which he was to address the words of God, אשר הראי, words that were not actually uttered by God but conveyed by God to Ezekiel by the unparalleled impact of symbolic visions.

On God's command his lips break their silence (Chapter 3, Verse 26). They become eloquent as they relate the Prophet's experiences, the reports of סלולק שכינה, the tragedy that defiled the Sanctuary and the sacred soil of the homeland, and the terrible collapse of a deluded nation. The Prophet contrasts all these realities with the challenge of the great task awaiting the *golah* and speaks of the *scenia* yearning to be reunited with its people.

Did the *golah* listen to the Prophet's words? Did they understand his message?

**Chap. 12.** 1. Then the word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, you dwell in the midst of the house of disobedience—they have eyes to see and have not seen; they have ears to hear and have not heard, for a house of disobedience are they.

3. But you, son of mankind, fashion for yourself tools for exile and go away into exile by day before their eyes, and travel from your place to another place before

יב וְיָהִי רַכְבֵּרֶתְּךָ אֱלֹהִים לְאָמֶר:

בְּנֵוֹתָם בְּתוֹךְ בֵּית־הַמִּשְׁרֵאָה  
יַשְׁבֵּת אֲשֶׁר עִינָּיוֹם לְהָם לְרֹאֹת וְלֹא  
רֹאוּ אָזְנוֹם לְהָם לְשֹׁמֵעַ וְלֹא שָׁמַעַ  
בְּיַד בֵּית קָרְבָּן הַם:

גְּ וְאָתָּה בְּנֵוֹתָם עֲשֵׂה לְכָךְ  
כָּלִי נָלוּה וְגָלָה יוֹסֵם לְעַזְנֵיהֶם  
גָּלוּתָּה טְפִיקָּתָךְ אֶל־מִקְּמוֹם אַחֲרֵךְ

**Chapter 12.** A long time was to pass before the *golah* would understand the message of Ezekiel. The influence of those who had remained behind in Jerusalem and as well as those already in the *golah* itself hampered the Prophet in his efforts. Both groups were so powerful that it was not yet possible for him to start on the construction of the new "Sanctuary" (מִקְדָּשׁ-Chapter 11, Verse 16) in the *golah*. As a consequence, Ezekiel's task for the immediate future was clear: using the means God had instructed him to employ for this purpose, he had to continue his constant, self-sacrificing struggle against these negative influences.

**Verse 2.** In his public appearances the Prophet had attempted (Chapters 8–11) to make his experiences known to the *golah*. But nothing had changed. The *golah* was still the same described at the opening of this Book (hence the תְּהִלָּה connects with Chapter 2). The Prophet's vivid descriptions of the imminent siege and fall of Jerusalem (Chapters 4–5) left the exiles unmoved. This characterization explains everything. The Prophet has been instructed by the Word of God to continue presenting his message in the language of symbolic acts.

**Verses 3–6.** The gruesome scenes recorded in Chapter 5 already gave the *golah* a detailed description of the fate that would befall the defeated population after the fall of Jerusalem. Nevertheless the *golah* persisted in its refusal to regard itself as a *golah*. Corrupt demagogues worked hand in hand with so-called "prophets" in the homeland, who asserted that the developments

their eyes—perhaps they will see,  
for a house of disobedience are  
they.

4. Then remove your tools, as  
tools of exile, by day before their  
eyes; but you go forth in the  
evening before their eyes, as one  
starts out to exile.

5. Before their eyes force your  
way through the wall and carry  
out through it.

6. Before their eyes carry on the  
shoulder, in darkness carry out,

לעיניהם אולין יראו כי בית מני  
הכה:

4. וְהוֹצַאת כָּלֵך בְּכָל נוֹלֶה יוֹקֵם  
לעיניהם וְאַתָּה פָּצָא בְּעַרְבָּה  
לעיניהם כִּמְצָאֵי נוֹלֶה:

5. לְעַינֵיכֶם חַתְּרַלֵע בְּקִיר  
וְהוֹצַאת בָּו:

6. לְעַינֵיכֶם עַל-כְּתָף תְּשִׁא

that had already been fated for the *galuth* were only temporary occurrences. Misusing the Name of God, they predicted in His name that Jeconiah, the holy vessels of the Sanctuary and the *golah* would return to the homeland within two years (Jeremiah, Chapters 28–29). Thoroughly misled, the people could not understand Ezekiel's strange behavior. And so the Prophet set out on a journey. As far as he was concerned, the symbolic acts had become realities. The Prophet experienced for himself the migrations of his people into exile—those that had already taken place and those that were yet to come (see Malbim).

*Verse 3.* The Prophet was commanded to prepare for himself the equipment needed for a journey into exile (נְדִירִים מ:). His "emigration" was to take place in broad daylight, in full view of the people. There is no need to tell us what his destination would be. The people had witnessed the disintegration of the Northern Kingdom with their own eyes. This was a reality they could not deny.

The Prophet is instructed to prepare for a second journey into exile. He is commanded to wander from one place to another, always in full view of the people. They have all witnessed *לעיניהם* the deportation of Jeconiah from Jerusalem to Babylonia. *אֲלֵיכֶם יְרַא*: But did they truly understand the events they had seen? A *כִּיה טַרְיָה* tends to close its mind even to the hard evidence of reality.

But this was only the beginning. For this, the final, extended phase of his wanderings, Ezekiel was told to gather all his possessions *כָל נוֹלֶה* as if they were objects generally needed by emigrants in flight. Dusk was to find him busily at work, making arrangements for the sort of departure commonly associated with *טַרְיָה נוֹלֶה*, "going forth" (*טַרְיָה*), as in Numbers 33,2). His preparations have all the characteristics of secret flight. He cannot

cover your face and do not see the ground—for I have designated you to be a convincing sign for the house of Israel.

7. I have done just as I was commanded; I removed my tools, as tools of exile, by day, and in the evening I forced my way through the wall by hand, in darkness did I bring out, before their eyes I carried on my shoulder.

בְּעַלְתָּה תֹצִיא פֶגֶץ תְכַפָּה  
לֹא תֵרֶא אֶת־הָאָרֶץ כִּימֻמָּת  
גַּמְתִּיק לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
וְאָעַשְׁ בָּן בְּאַשְׁר צִוָּתִי  
כָּלִי הַזְּאוּתִי בְּכָלִי גָּוֹלָה יוֹקֵם  
וּבְעָרֶב חַתְּרוֹתִילִ בְּקִיר בָּנָן  
בְּעַלְתָּה הַזְּאוּתִי עַל־כַּתְּפַנְשָׁאָתִי  
לְעִינֵיכֶם: ס

risk leaving through the gate of the city. He must break through the wall at an inconspicuous place through which he is to carry out his possessions, **הוֹצָאת** ۱۲. But since he is fleeing under cover of darkness, he can take with him only whatever he can carry on his back. So this is the place from which the unfortunate fugitive must steal away from the city. He is like a man (**עִילָּסָה**, see Genesis 15.17) who, even in the darkness of night, feels that he must cover his face because his burning shame keeps him from looking upon the ground he is leaving behind in such furtive haste.

All the Prophet's preparations for this departure must take place in full view of the people; the word **לְעִינֵיכֶם** is repeated six times in Verses 3–6. These preparations were symbolic acts, **סְמָךָן**, intended as "signs that take hold of man, making him receptive to the lessons they are intended to teach him" (**מְתַהַה**, *hiphil*, to teach a lesson, see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 4.21). The Prophet himself is to serve as a living **סְמָךָן**; defying all attempts at concealment, he must literally force the people to become aware of the imminent *galuth*.

**Verse 7.** The Prophet did as he was told. That is all he has to say about the instructions he received (Verse 3). He need not dwell upon his actions because they served only as an introduction to what followed (Verses 4–6), especially since they are already past history. (See Malbim). Daylight had seen the Prophet preparing for his departure in full view of the people; now the furtive escape, attempted at night in an atmosphere of sadness and anxiety, was also accomplished.

**חַתְּרוֹתִילִ בְּיַד:** The Prophet had made the hole in the wall with his own hands. Such little touches show the conscientious devotion with which the Prophets carried out every command they received from God. In his anxious haste to speed up his departure, no matter what the cost, the Prophet does not wait until he can get the proper tools but uses his own hands to break through the wall.

**8.** Then the word of God came to me in the morning:

וַיֹּאמֶר רְبָרִי הוּא אֱלֹהִים בְּקָרְבָּן:

**9.** Son of mankind, they have spoken to you, the house of Israel, the house of disobedience: What do you do?

וְבָנֵר אָדָם הַלָּא אָמְרוּ אֶלְךָ בַּתְּהֻבָּה:  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בֵּית הַמְּרִי כִּי אַתָּה עֲשָׂה:

**10.** Say to them, thus spoke my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: It is the prince whom this fate will befall in Yerushalayim, and the whole house of Israel in whose midst they dwell.

אָמַר אֱלֹהִים כִּי אָמַר אֶלְנִי  
יְהוָה הַגְּשִׁיא הַמְּשֹׁא הַזֶּה  
בֵּירָשְׁלָם וּכְלַבְּיַת וּשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר  
הַפָּה בְּתוֹכָם:

**11.** Say: I am your convincing sign; as I have acted, so shall it happen to them—into exile, into captivity they will go.

אָמַר אָנִי מַופְתָּחֵיכֶם כִּי אָשֶׁר  
עֲשִׂיתִי בָּנֶיךָ יִعָשֶׂה לְהֶם בְּגֹלוֹתָה  
בְּשָׁבֵי יְלָכֵד:

**12.** And the prince in their midst, on the shoulder he will

אָמַר אָנִי מַופְתָּחֵיכֶם כִּי אָשֶׁר  
בְּתַפְתָּחָה וְשָׁא בְּעַלְתָּה וַיֵּצֵא בְּקִידָּר

**Verses 8–9.** Not until the next morning, after he had been silently at work in the midst of his people making his preparations for his symbolic departure, does Ezekiel receive instructions from God to answer the questions of the curious onlookers. **בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** had stood around the Prophet, watching his actions. Even though they were **בֵּית מִרְיָה**, these people, puzzled by Ezekiel's frenzied activity, could not help feeling anxious, and they asked him, **מָה אַתָּה עֲשָׂה**. But the Prophet's tongue had been paralyzed (Chapter 3, Verse 26); his actions, not his words, were to gain the attention of the people. Not until the next morning did God "open the mouth" of the Prophet (Chapter 3, Verse 27).

**Verses 10–11.** **כִּי אָמַר הָאֱלֹהִים**: His mouth proclaims his mission. That which the people had seen was the **מִשְׁמָר**, the "burden" or "fate" which had decreed for the last hapless prince of Jerusalem and for **כָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל**, the remnants of the people still left in the homeland. **אֲשֶׁר הַמָּה בְּתוֹכָם** refers to **אֱלֹהִים**: The *golah* yearns for those who are still in the homeland, where they cling to the hopes nurtured by their ill-inspired leaders. These hopes will prove to be false. The *galuth* has become reality. That which the Prophet had made them see with their own eyes was a **סָתוֹת**; the impact of actual events nullified every effort to refute them.

**Verses 12–13.** The Prophet has acted out for the people every last detail of the final moments in which Zedekiah (see II Kings 25; Jeremiah 39,52),

carry, in the dark of night he will go forth, a breach will be forced through the wall in order to remove through it; his face he will cover, because he does not wish to see with his own eyes, he—his land.

13. And then I shall spread My net over him, and he will be caught in My snare; and I shall bring him to Babel, to the land of the Chaldeans, but he does not see it, and there he will die.

14. And all that consisted of his surroundings, his help, all the wings of his army, I will scatter into all the winds, and the sword I will draw after them.

15. Thus they will know that I am ה, when I dispel them among the nations, when I scatter them among the lands.

16. Only men few in number will I leave over, spared from the

יבחרו להוציאו בוניו וכשהען  
אשר לאיראה לעין הוא אלה  
הארץ:

13. ופרשתי אתדרשתי עלי  
ונתפֵש במקורה והבאתי אותו  
גבלה ארץ פשדים ואוֹתָה לא-  
יראה ושם ימוּת:

14. וכל אשר סכיבתו עורה וככל  
אנפוי אונקה לכל רוחות ותרב אריק  
אחריהם:

15. וירא קידאני והזה בהפיצי  
אותם בנויים ועריתם אותם  
בארצות:

16. והותרתני מכם אנשי מס'ר  
נורקי:

stripped of the last illusion of royal power, is concerned only with his bare survival. He has covered his face, עזע אשר לא יראה לען; he does not want to see, הואה את הארץ הַזְרָחָה the unhappy land from which he is forced to flee. But his eyes will also not behold the land to which the enemy, drunk with victory, will bring his victim לא יראה הארץ. Blinded (II Kings, ibid.), he will spend the rest of his life in desolate darkness.

*Verses 14–15.* Such is the end of this ruler who, though weak, was essentially not wicked (see Jeremiah 38) but merely a helpless victim of circumstances. צورو, the help he had expected had failed miserably. The armies which he had hoped would deploy (אנפוי Aramaic: wings) "winged strength" to save him from destruction were scattered by ה to the four winds. Dispersed among the nations and scattered to every land, they finally recognize Him Who alone, as אמר יעקב, could have provided them with the "winged strength" to defy all the powers of the world.

*Verse 16.* As the wretched remnants of a once-great nation they will spread over all the world the image of the tragic fate of a nation that had thoughtlessly

sword, from hunger, from pestilence, that they may tell of all their abominations among the nations in whose midst they come—thus they will know that I am.” (v. 17)

**17.** And the word of God came to me:

**18.** Son of mankind, eat your bread in trembling, and your water you drink it in fear and in distress.

**19.** And speak to the people of the land: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, to those who dwell in Yerushalayim [which they still regard] as the soil of Israel: Their bread they will eat in distress, their water they will drink utterly parched, so that the land will be desolate from its former abundance because of the wrongdoings of all its inhabitants.

**20.** When the once populated cities have been laid waste and the

מַחְרֶב מִרְעָב וּמִמְּכֹר לְמַעַן  
יִסְפְּרוּ אֶת־כָּל־תֹּועֲבֹתֵיכֶם  
בְּגֻנוּם אֲשֶׁר־בָּאוּ שָׁם וַיַּרְאוּ כִּי  
אָנִי יְהוָה: פ

17. וְיָהִי רְבִרִירֹתָה אֱלֹהִים לְאָמֵר:

18. קָנְדָרִים לְחַמּוֹן בְּרַעַשׂ תַּאֲכֵל  
וּמִימִיךְ בְּרַגְנָה וּבְרָאָנָה תְּשַׁתָּה:  
19. וְאָמְרָתָ אֶל־עַם הָאָרֶץ כֹּה  
אָכְרָדָנִי יְהוָה לְיוֹשָׁבִי וּרוֹשָׁלָם  
אֶל־אָרְכָתִי וּשְׁرָאֵל לְחַמּוֹן בְּרָאָנָה  
יָאָכְלָו וּמִימִיכָם בְּשִׁפְכוֹן יָשַׁטְנָ  
לְמַעַן תָּשִׁם אֶרְצָה מִפְלָאָה מַחְמָקָם  
בְּלִיהִישְׁכָּבִים בָּה:

20. וְהַעֲרִים הַנּוֹשָׁבָות תַּחֲרַבְנָה

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cast away its prosperity and good fortune by exchanging its Divine heritage for חַוּבוֹת. Only in the *galuth* will they come to their senses: (see Chapter 6).

*Verses 18–20.* We have already seen in Chapter 4 how the Prophet, suffering from hunger and thirst, symbolically lived through the siege of Jerusalem. Now we have seen him set out on the journey to lead his deluded people into the Divinely-ordained *galuth*. If he is now commanded by God to eat his bread in anxiety and to drink his water in apprehension, this behavior must symbolize conditions that can be documented as having set in after the collapse of the state. These actions were meant to symbolize the fate of the pitiful remnants of the Jewish population that had been allowed by the Babylonian conquerors to remain in the homeland as a Jewish colony under Babylonian rule. Accordingly, Ezekiel must address his *golah* as *עַם הָאָרֶץ*, which, in contrast to the designation *בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל* (Verse 9), would describe the remnant in terms of its complete detachment from the soil of their homeland, as

**וְהָאָרֶץ שִׁמְקָה תְּהִיָּה וַיַּדְעֵתֶם בְּיַדְעַנִי יְהוָה:**

21. And the word of God came to me: וַיָּהֵי דְבָר־יְהוָה אֲלֹעַ לְאַפִּרְךָ:

the "population of the land," having lost the last of its political independence. Even as Ezekiel's *golah* in Babylonia is only *עם הארץ* in terms of nationhood, so these remnants in the homeland can be only *עם הנשארים בארץ הארץ* (Jeremiah 40:6).

However, it is also possible that the present chapter employs the term אָזֶר in the same connotation as it is used in Leviticus 20,2. In that case, it would connote a reproach: they still regard themselves as "the nation borne and sustained by this land" (see also our commentary to Chapter 39,13), when in fact that very land had "spit them out" long ago. They were to suffer the fate of *galut* as strangers in their own native land. This was indeed a harsh decree. They were יִשְׁבּוּ יְרוּשָׁלָם, and they still regarded their land as מִדְּתָחֵל יִשְׂרָאֵל, and yet they had to consider themselves the subjects of Babylonian rule. (See our commentary to Chapters 40–42 of the Book of Jeremiah.) Gedaliah had promised them that they would be able to make respectable lives for themselves under the protection of the Babylonian ruler (Jeremiah 40,10). But it seems that Gedaliah's assurances failed to win the confidence of the people. Fear of an uncertain future, the threat of famine (Jeremiah 42,14 לֹא תַּמְלִיכְתָּם לְאַנְגָּלִים; Verse 16 חֲרוּב אֲשֶׁר אַתֶּם דְּאָגִים טָמֵנוּ נָרְעָב) and evil lurking under the cover of political ambition made the tragedy of the unhappy land complete. This was the final בָּהָה experienced by the sorely tried land; it resulted in the country's utter ruin לְמַעַן שֵׁם אָזֶר—חַטָּמָה וּרְאֵב. The Prophet was not permitted to spare his *golah* even this last view of the bleak condition of their homeland because, being בֵּית טָהָר, they refused to think of themselves as עַם אָזֶר. Would they, too, have to behold the ruined cities and the desolate homeland before they would understand כִּי אָנִי הָ? (Verse 20)?

Note the cumulative expressions (Verse 19) **לחם בראגיה, ומידות בשפטך** in comparison with Verse 18. The mood of anxiety and apprehension in which the Prophet ate his bread and drank his water could not possibly equal the anguish and the numb despair with which a nation unwilling to accept its fate as a decree from God would look toward an uncertain future. And so the Prophet, with matchless heroism, wages the fight against the enemies of the Word of God, whether near or far away. His struggle will not be in vain. He will win the day. The ultimate triumph of his cause is assured by two terse but momentous pronouncements of God.

**22.** Son of mankind, what is the meaning of this saying to you on the soil of Israel: The days will be long and every visionary prophetic word will be gone.

כִּנְאָרְם מִה-הַמְּשֻׁל הַזֶּה לְכֶם  
עַל-אָרְקָמָת וֵישָׁרָאֵל לְאֹמֵר יָאָרְכָו:  
הַיּוֹם וְאַבָּר בְּלִיחּוֹן:

**23.** Therefore, say to them: ז. לְכָן אָמַר אֲלֵיכֶם כִּי-אָמַר

**Verse 22.** The first Divine utterance takes issue with the so-called **טַל**. A **טַל** is a rhetorical device used to characterize people, circumstances and attitudes as they really are and as they should ideally be; it expresses a truth that is considered "universally applicable" (**טַל**, "to rule" or "reign"; see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 4:7; Numbers 23.) The **טַל** in the present verse "reigns" upon sacred soil, where it seeks to win over the hearts and minds of the people. The purpose of this particular **טַל** is nothing less and nothing more than to demonstrate that no **חַדּוֹן** is based on truth! **חַדּוֹן** (related to **חַדּוֹת**) refers to the Divinely-inspired words of a prophet, in terms of their penetration into contemporary developments and their assertion that the future events resulting from the shortcomings of the present will be decreed by God. God, Who shapes the fate of His mankind in accordance with the education and discipline it requires, opens the eyes of the Prophet so that he may attain a better understanding of present events and become the harbinger of a God-ordained future. The fact is that, from the very beginning, **אָרְצָת יִשְׂרָאֵל**, "the soil wedded to Israel," had been promised to Israel as part of precisely such a Divine **חַדּוֹן**. The entire **סְפָר דָּבָרִים** is one great Divine **חַדּוֹן**, spelling out the precepts which every generation of Jewish history must fulfill if it is to avoid a fate that will bury Israel's happiness and break the bond that binds Israel to the soil of God. Who, then, can fathom the incredible shamelessness of those who would dare question the authenticity of the Divine **חַדּוֹן** on sacred soil and who responded with the words **יִאָרְתִּי** when the Prophet predicted the imminent collapse of the Jewish state. Let the days be long, they said, just wait and see, permit the coming events to speak for themselves; the developments of the future will prove that no **חַדּוֹן** ever comes true. The shape of things to come will put an end, once and for all, to the belief in **חַדּוֹן**. Would Israel indeed dare spread a **טַל** of that sort? (Since these words are addressed to **בְּנֵי אָדָם**, **טַל** refers to Israel together with the Prophet.) Unless you have become totally estranged from the spirit that inspires the Prophet as **בָּנֵי אָדָם**, as the herald of a new and pure future for mankind, how could you permit such a **טַל** to circulate on "the soil of Israel," hoping that it would attain the credibility of "rulership"?

**Verse 23.** The Prophet is bidden to continue his fight against this **טַל**. When the proponents of the **חַדּוֹם**, **יִאָרְתִּי**, he must retort, **טַל**:

Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: I cause this saying to vanish, never will it be used again in Israel as a saying—rather, say to them: The days draw near and every visionary prophetic word (can be regarded as) a pronouncement of God.

**24.** For no longer will a prophetic vision of nothingness and smoothly fraudulent fortune-telling find a place within the house of Israel.

**25.** For I, ה' will say what I shall

אָרְלֹנִי יְהוָה הַשְׁבַּתִּי אֶת־הַמָּשֵׁל  
הַזֶּה וְלֹא־יִמְשֹׁלׁוּ אֲתֶךָ עַזְזָבָן  
בִּיְשָׂרָאֵל בְּיַם אַסְדוֹבָר אֲלֵיכֶם  
גָּרְבוּ נִמְים וְדָכַר בְּלִחְזָוָן:

**24.** כִּי לֹא יִהְיֶה עֹד כְּלִתְבּוֹן שְׁווֹא  
וּמְקֻסָּם חָלֵק בְּתוֹךְ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**25.** כִּי אָנֹכִי יְהֹוָה אֱרֹבֶר אֶת־אָשָׁר

Only a short while and every מין will be confirmed as a דבר (is to be added, implying the word of the Invisible God). Every מין will carry its own Divine credentials. The משל, on the other hand, will be exposed as false by coming events and can never gain ground in Israel.

*Verse 24.* The לִבָּם mentioned above questioned the authenticity of every מותם. It asserted that the future, for good or ill, does not depend on whether or not a nation conducts its life in accordance with the standards set by God. According to this view, the only factors that can affect the future of any nation are the realities of raw power. The purpose of the Prophet's מין was to refute this unacceptable treacherous notion.

The Prophet's words met with resistance not only from men who sought to poison the nation's conscience by promoting a radically materialistic view of history. A much greater threat was posed by the pseudo-prophets who, without openly attempting to destroy the "folk belief" in Divine מין, offered to their gullible listeners their own comfortable brand of prophecy, concocting a מין of their own to flatter the vanity of the people and to neutralize the true מין of God. (See Chapter 13). But coming events will put an end to their disobedience once and for all. Any מין which, in the final analysis, is simply a blatant lie constructed to blind the people with pseudo-prophetic utterances (see the etymological explanation of מושג, Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 18,10) will ultimately be exposed as utter falsehood before a nation's conscience purified by the impact of what is to come.

*Verse 25.* Henceforth it is only ה' Who will speak. His Word alone will attract the attention of everyone. It will be a word מושג that already bears within it the seeds of its fulfillment at the time it is first uttered. לא מושג

say; it will be a word that will bear its own fulfillment within it; it will not be delayed—for, in your days, house of disobedience, I shall speak a word that I have already fulfilled, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**26.** And the word of God came to me:

**27.** Son of mankind, behold, the house of Israel is speaking: The visionary prophetic word which he foretells, for many days and distant times he prophesies it.

**28.** Therefore, say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kind-

ארבר רבר ונוועשה לא תפסיק  
עד כי כוימיכם בית המרי ארבר  
רבר ועשיותו נאש ארני יהוה:

**26.** ויהי רבר יהזה אליל אמרה:

**27.** גונאים הנה בית ישראל  
אקרים תחווין אשר יהוא חזיה  
לזימים רגינוס וולעתים רוחקות יהוא  
נביא:

**28.** לכן אמך אליהם כי אמר

it will not linger weakly (hence the feminine form **תפסק**), waiting for the developments of the future to prove its Divine origin. Once the word of God—proclaimed by the Prophet to the people—has been borne out by historic fact, then all future generations will gladly accept God's truth which, for now, the Prophet has to hold out to an unbelieving people. **בית המרי** The Prophet proclaims the Word of God **וזכר דבר ועתה** which carries within it the seeds of its forthcoming realization. For what other reason would it be called a **טעם** of God?

**Verses 27–28.** The message of these verses also demolishes the belief of those who accept the Prophet's words as a true **טעם**, respect him as a vessel of the Divine spirit, but who calm their apprehensions by telling themselves that the predictions of the Prophet will only come true in the very distant future **תקדים ותשתי** (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 9,10). They do not realize that the dissemination of such an attitude will weaken the impact of the Word of God; a true Word of God **לא תפסק** does not linger without action; **משה**, God speaks and immediately causes His words to come true. He who truly believes in the realization of all God's words will never seek or find comfort in the notion that they will not come true until **תקדים ותשתי**.

ness in justice: No longer shall any of all My words be delayed; whatever I speak, it is a word which will be fulfilled—such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 13.** 1. And the word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, as a prophet you will approach the prophets of Israel who claim to be prophets and say to them who are only prophets out of their own hearts: Hear the word of God!

ארני יהוה לא-תטשך עוד כל־  
רבני אשר ארבך דבר נעשה  
באים ארני יהוה: ס

יג. וַיֹּאמֶר רְבִרֵינוּ לְאָלֵי לְאָמֵד:  
2. גּוֹדָרִים הַגְּבָא אַל־גְּבָאי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל הַגְּבָאים וְאַסְרָת לְגְבָאי  
מִלְּבָד שָׁפָע דְּכָרִירָה:

Have they not read the momentous **נִמְמָה** of the Book of God which, again and again, without cease, spells out the conditions under which alone the people of God can expect "length of days" on sacred soil? Their cavalier, impudent **מִשְׁלָח** is countered in Deuteronomy 4,26 with the threat that **אֲבֹד תָּבֹדֵן** and **לֹא תָהִיר טִים**. Similarly, their reprehensible utterance **לִימָם וּבִיטָה** is countered by the eternal Word of God according to which God's promise **לְמַעַן רַבּוּ יִפְנִים** (Deuteronomy 11,21) will be fulfilled only if the people faithfully carry out His Laws.

This compelling **נִמְמָה** gives our Prophet the strength to continue his battle for God's cause even in the midst of a **בֵּית מִרְאֵשׁ**, secure in the knowledge that his vision is authentic and will ultimately triumph.

**Chapter 13.** God expresses His flaming anger at the false prophets. Jeremiah (23,29) has gained a mighty ally in the struggle against those who would use the holy Name of God for their own evil purposes.

**Verse 2.** **מִבְּדָל**, "the verbs used with reference to words of solemn prophecy always take the *niphal* form" (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,25). It is not on his own but as the mouthpiece of God, the vessel through which the Word of God is poured forth to man" (hence the passive verb form) that Ezekiel confronts the **בְּבָיא שָׁאָלָה**, the individuals in the far-off homeland as well as those in the *golah* who would dare (**טְרִיבָה**) disgrace the sanctity of prophecy and who, pretending to have been chosen by God, carry on their

3. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Woe for the prophets, the morally withered ones, who follow the urging of their mind and that which they have never seen!

4. They are like foxes in the ruins, who have become your prophets, Israel.

5. You have not stepped into the

בָּה אָמַר אֶלְנִי יְהוָה קֹוי עַל־  
הַנּוֹבִיאִים הַנְּבָלִים אֲשֶׁר הַלְּקִים  
אַחֲרֵ רֹוּתָם וְלַבְלָתָיו רָאָה

כְּשַׂעֲלִים בְּחֻרְבּוֹת נְבִיאִים  
וּשְׂרָאֵל קֹיוֹ:

לَا עַלְיָתָם בְּפָרְצֹות וְתַגְדִּרוֹ

activities relying on their own subjective views, which are not based on truth. Ezekiel wields the mighty force of God's word to crush these individuals who are nothing more than **נוֹבִיאִים**.

*Verse 3.* Woe to the men who would dare trifle with Divine matters. To muster the impertinence to misuse the word of God for their own selfish ambitions they must have become **נוֹבִים** (for the meaning of **נוֹבִילִים** see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 14,1), they must have lost that last spark of moral decency which could have liberated them from the bondage of immorality. They lost that spark of decency that could have made them receptive to the instructive and controlling influence of the **רוּתָה**, encouraging them to take the path shown them by God Who alone sees and understands all things. In order to behave as they did they must have permitted their own lives to become subjects of their own **רוּתָה**, intent exclusively on the gratification of their own desires that are based solely on material considerations, completely ignoring the purposes of life that have stood the test of truth (**וְלַבְלָתָיו**). Only men who have become morally "withered" (**נוֹבֵל**), who have no more use for God in their own lives, will raise their evil hands against Him. Alas that the nation of God should have been willing to listen to such despicable creatures!

*Verses 4–7* are addressed alternately to the people (4 and 6) and to their pseudo-prophets (5 and 7).

*Verse 4.* The "prophets" are like foxes disporting themselves among the ruins; only amidst ruins can they find the shelter they seek. As long as such ruins exist, they need not fear exposure or expulsion. Hence it is in their interest that these ruins should remain as they are, with no effort to clear them away and to build new edifices in their place. And such men call themselves prophets!

*Verse 5.* Has it ever occurred to any one of them to step into the breach that frivolity has opened in the life of the Jewish people, to build fences that

breaches and erected a fence for the house of Israel which might support it in battle on the day of God!

6. They have seen nothingness and delusive fortune-telling, who say "it is the pronouncement of God," and yet God has never sent them—and they hope that He would bring about their word!

7. Since you indeed have seen an empty prophetic vision and spoken delusive fortune-telling—and say "it is the pronouncement of God," and yet I have not spoken!

8. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Since you have spoken nothingness and seen the delusion, therefore I turn against you, thus is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

גַּרְרָע עַל־בִּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעֹמֶד  
בְּמַלְחָמָה בַּיּוֹם יְהֻנָּה:

וְתֹוו שֹׁוֹא וְקַסְפָּם בָּזֶב הַאֲמָרִים  
נָאָס־יְהֻנָּה וַיְהֻנָּה לֹא שְׁלָחָם וַיְחַלֵּן  
לְקַנְּסָם דָּבָר:

זְהַלּוֹא מִחוֹה־שֹׁוֹא חַזְוִיקָם  
וְקַסְפָּם בָּזֶב אֲמָרָתָם וְאֲמָרִים  
נָאָס־יְהֻנָּה וַיְהֻנָּה לֹא דְבָרְתָּהָי ס

טְלִכְנָה כִּי אָמָר אַרְצִי יְהֻנָּה יְעַן  
דְּבָרָכֶם שֹׁוֹא וְחַזְוִיקָם בָּזֶב לְכָנָה  
הַגְּנִינָה אֲלֵיכֶם נָאָס אַרְצִי יְהֻנָּה:

would protect and fortify the people of Israel, that would save Israel at the imminent hour of God's wrath? They lack even the most basic attributes of Jewish leadership—and yet they dare claim for themselves the title נְבִיא once borne by משה (see *Yalkut*).

*Verse 6.* They dare clothe their lies and their baseless dreams for the future in the garments of Divine prophecy. They present themselves to the gullible people as messengers of God, unscrupulously feeding them with false hopes until rude disillusionment will put an end to their machinations for all time.

*Verses 7–8.* Even as he makes clear to his people how cruelly their trust has been abused (Verse 6), the Prophet tears the mask of falsehood also from the faces of the false prophets: חַנִּינִי לֹא דְבָרָתִי; there is no truth in what you want to make the people believe, in what you seek to present as words of prophecy (תְּהִלָּה). Your pseudo-prophecy (מִחוֹה שֹׁוֹא חַזְוִיקָם) is nothing but lies (שֹׁוֹא) (Verse 8). You have trifled not only with the conscience of the people

9. And My hand will turn against these prophets who have seen nothingness and foretold delusion: In the inner circle of My people they shall not remain, and where the house of Israel is recorded they shall not be inscribed, and to the soil of Israel they shall not come back—and thus you will recognize that I am the Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

10. Because and for the reason that they have led My people astray with the words: Peace—but

וְנַוְתֵּר יְהוָה אֶל-הַגְּבִיעִים הַחֲזִים  
שְׁוֹא וְהַקְּסִים בָּזֶב בָּסָר עַמִּי  
לְאִירָיו וּבְכָתָב קַיְתִּידְיְשָׂרָאֵל לְאֵת  
יִתְהַכֵּן וְאַל-אָרֶם יִשְׁדָּאֵל לְאֵת  
בָּלָאו וַיַּרְעַתָּם כִּי-אָנִי אֶלְנִי וְלֹהֶה:

וְיַעַן וּבַעַן הַטָּעו אֶת-עַמִּי  
לְאָמֵד שָׁלוֹם וְאֵין שָׁלוֹם וְהֹא

but also with the Name of God, and God will not permit anyone to trifle with Him!

*Verse 9.* God has excluded them from the close circle of his confidants (סִדְךָ) that have been found worthy of gathering around Him as "God's own nation." He has erased their names from the Book of His Providence in which even the most modest efforts at a life of solemn duty are recorded (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 32,32). "They shall be blotted out from the Book of Life, and never more be written with the righteous" (Psalms 69,29). By their open contempt for God and His Word, they have forfeited their claim to the land which God gave to His people only so that every aspect of their lives in that land might be imbued with the spirit of God and godliness.

*Verse 10.* יַעַן וּבַעַן (cf. Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 26,43): their punishment will be determined by their sins. In their blind folly, the people have built up a wall (this is the only instance in תנ"ך where the word צָמָן is used; it corresponds to the term צָמָנוּ used later on to denote a wall intended to divide and protect). The people hope that the wall will protect them from danger and that creates in their minds an illusion of peace which, in fact, has ceased to exist for them long ago. But instead of taking steps to end this illusion as any responsible leader would have done as a matter of course, these false prophets have done all they could to keep it alive among the masses. Because the ruins of Jewish independence have provided them with the foundations they need for the fulfillment of their personal, selfish ambitions (see Verse 4), the false prophets have sought to give to these walls the appearance of a strong, secure structure. They clothed the decaying, collapsing wall in a whitewash creating an impression of strength and durability.

there is no peace! [The people] build for themselves a wall, and they cover it with a coating that does not last!

**11.** Say to those who use the coating that will not last: It will fall away, because the rain had already washed it away; and you, mighty hailstones, plunge down, and storm winds, on all sides break through!

**12.** And behold, once the wall has fallen, then it can be said to you: Where then is the coating with which you covered it?

**13.** Therefore, thus says my

בְּנֵה חَيִזْ וְהַגָּם טְחִים אֶתְנוֹ תְּפַלֵּל:

<sup>11.</sup> אָמַר אֶל־טְחִי תְּפַל וַיַּפְלֵל הַיּוֹם  
בְּשֵׁם שׂוֹטֵף וְאֲתָנָה אֶבְנֵי אֶלְגְּבִישׁ  
תְּפַלְנָה וְרוּחַ סְעֻדּוֹת תְּבַקְעֶה:

<sup>12.</sup> וְהַנֵּה נִפְלֵל הַקּוֹר בְּלֹא יָאִמֵּר  
אֲלֵיכֶם אֲנָה הַפִּיח אֲשֶׁר טְחִים:

<sup>13.</sup> לְכָן בָּה אָמַר אַרְגַּנִּי יְהוָה

טו, "to clothe," to provide with a facade (see Leviticus 14,42). **טְפֵל** is related to **טו**, "to attach to a person or a thing a body or thought that will not remain with it" (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 119,69). This term characterizes the whitewash as worthless and absurd. In a similar vein Jeremiah (23,13) uses the word **חַטָּלה** to denote the preposterous, foolish chatter of the false prophets. The present verse must also be taken in this dual interpretation.

שלום ואין שלום: see Jeremiah 6,14.

*Verse 11.* The tragic collapse is inevitable. **וַיַּפְלֵל**: first, the whitewash will peel off; it could not have withstood even a driving rain (that is why in this verse, as distinct from Verse 13, **גַּם שׁוֹטֵף** is mentioned before the storm). Imagine, then, what will happen when the terrible thunderstorm will strike! Massive hailstones and heavy gales (hence, **סְעֻדוֹת**) will batter the wall from every side.

**אֶלְגְּבִישׁ** is probably the same as (*Job 28,18*): **גָּבוֹשׁ**, "massive," "thick;" i.e., mighty hailstones; **תְּנָךְ**: second person, feminine, plural; see Genesis 31,6.

*Verse 12.* Once they see the wall in ruins before them, the disillusioned people, belatedly awakening to their plight, may perhaps turn against those who deliberately sought to hide the truth from them. Jeremiah (8,15) expresses Ezekiel's desperate cry **אָתָה הַסִּיחָה** in these moving words: **מִלְשָׁמָד חַיִן סָבֵב לְעֵת** "Hope for peace? Nothing good anywhere! A time for healing? Behold, the terror!"

*Verses 13–14.* God's wrath adds devastating momentum (כָּלָה) to the storm.

Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I let the storm wind break through on all sides in My fury, and the rain will be washing away because of My anger, and the mighty hailstones (fall) in fury to destruction.

**14.** And I will tear down the wall which you have covered with coating that does not last; place it down to earth, and its foundation will be exposed; when it plunges down, you will perish in it and you will recognize that I am God.

**15.** Until the end I shall turn My fury against the wall and against those who cover it with a coating that does not last; I say to you: Nowhere is the wall, nowhere those that paint it over:

**16.** Prophets of Israel who have spoken prophetic words onto Yerushalayim and seen for it the prophetic vision of peace—and

ובקעתי רוח-סערות בחרטמי  
ונשים שטף באפי ויהה ואכני  
אלגבייש בחרטה לךלה:

**14.** וחרסתי את-הקיר אשר-  
טחתם תפל והגעתיו אל-הארץ  
ונגלה יסרו ונפלוה וכליותם בתוכה  
וירעום כי-אני יהוָה:

**15.** וכליותי את-חרטמי בקיור  
ובטחים אותו תפל ואמר לך  
אין הקיור ואין הטעמים אתה:

**16.** נבואי ישראל הנבאים אל-

The wall has been struck down, exposing the flimsy foundations on which the people, in their folly, had built their hopes for the future. As it collapsed, the wall buried beneath its ruins those who had so unscrupulously covered it with whitewash. They have brought about their own destruction by their evil deeds. That is the import of God's words (Verse 10).

*Verses 15–16.* God's wrath will have achieved its purpose only when the demagoguery that has robbed God's own nation of its understanding for the requirements of its Divinely ordained calling has been wiped out entirely, when not even a trace will remain of the "wall" built by human folly. And then the nation of God, cured of its illusions, will wonder in abject shame how anyone could have put his trust in such men and believed in their promises of peace, which, in fact, were a travesty of any true, Divinely-inspired prophecy. Only then will God be able to cease from His anger and begin to rebuild Israel's future on foundations of purity.

still there is no peace! That is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

17. But you, son of mankind, turn your face onto the daughters of your people who pose as prophetesses of their own heart and pronounce over them your prophetic word.

18. Say, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice; Woe to them who fasten cushions onto all shoulders and spread the veils over

וְרוּשָׁלָם וַיהוָה לְהִזְון שָׁלָם  
וְאַיִן שָׁלָם נָאֵם אֲרֹנִי יְהוָה פ

17. וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי־אָדָם שִׁים פָּנֶיךָ אֶל־  
בָּנֹות עַמְּךָ הַמְּתַנְבֹּאות מִלְבָחָנוּ  
וְהַגְּבָא עַלְיָהָן:

18. וְאָמַרְתָּ כִּי־אָמַר אֲרֹנִי יְהוָה  
הָוֶלֶת־מִתְפָּרוֹת בְּסֻתּוֹת עַל־כָּל־  
אַצְלֵי נָרִי עֲשָׂות הַמְּסֻפָּחוֹת

*Verse 17.* But these were not yet all the antagonists with whom Ezekiel had to contend. Among the false prophets in the midst of his people there were also women. God bids him to consider these as well. Balaam, that great "magician," would never have imagined that the nation of God, which he admired so greatly, would ever fall prey to witchcraft. There was a time when he was forced to admit that לא קם בישראל (Numbers 23,23) that Israel, a nation that strives to fulfill the ideal of האלקת נפש can have no use for magic. Such beliefs can take hold only of those who fear for their future and who, in their anxiety, are ready to accept any mystical scheme offered to them. Israel was not so: it had the Word of God to which to turn for guidance in every phase of its existence and which alone it accepted as the norm for its decisions so that it might confidently leave its future entirely to Divine Providence. But ever since the Word of God no longer reigned supreme in Israel, the magic arts of wily females came to the fore. המתנבאות (the *hithpael* form) is used also to denote making oneself the mouthpiece of one's own fabrications and emotional imaginings (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,25). Unlike their male counterparts, these "prophetesses" found it difficult to pose as Divinely-inspired leaders in order to gain influence over wide segments of the people; besides, they had recourse to the subtle means of witchcraft which, to all appearances, they were able to use most impressively.

*Verse 18.* תַּסְתַּת, "to sew," "to knot;" מִתְבָּחָן is a Talmudic term for "pillows" or "cushions." (אַצְלֵי נָרִי) a plural form as in Jeremiah 22,14), "the place where the arm is joined to the body (אַגְלָה); i.e., the shoulder" (see Hirsch Commentary,

the head of all who should stand upright in order to snare souls! Should you indeed snare souls for My people and bring to life such souls as were taken in by you?

**19.** They blot Me out from the mind of My people for a few measures of barley and for crumbs of bread: To slay souls that need not die and bring to life souls who should not live; in that you practice deceit on My people that listen to your deception.

על־ראש כל־קומה לצורר נפשות הנפשות תצונרנה לעמי ונפשות לבנה תחניינה:

19. ותחללנה את־אלה־עפני בשביעי שעריהם ובפתחותיהם לךם להמית נפשות אשר לא־תמותנה ולחיות נפשות אשר לא־תחיינה בכובכם לעמי שמעי כוב: ס

Numbers 11,17). תִּנְסֹב (תָּסַב, "to attach oneself to another"), a "veil"(?) These terms refer to ancient practices of witchcraft that have been lost in time and whose meaning is no longer clear. But the mere mention of them is sufficient to let us know that, alas, many Jewish souls fell victim to such arts. Whether the soothsayers knotted cushions over their clients' shoulders or flung veils over their heads is immaterial. It is enough for us to know that all those that should have stood erect in their presence (כל קומה bowed down before them instead. They knew how to capture the desperate souls who consulted them to be told their futures and who, with bated breath, awaited the verdict of whether or not they would survive.

**Verse 19.** And so these gullible people came to view God's almighty Name as unreal and meaningless. They no longer looked to His Word for life or death. They no longer listened to the Word of God that ennobles men, confers freedom and dignity on every human being (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 30,10) and gives man the freedom to make his own choice between life and death. Instead, they looked anxiously to mysterious oracles. They did not realize that the promises of life from these self-styled prophetesses could be obtained for the price of just a few measures of barley (שָׂעִיר, Isaiah 40,12; see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 22,24) or a few miserable crumbs of bread (טָהוֹת). Whoever refused to pay the price, no matter how righteous he might be, was summarily blotted out from that spurious book of life, while those who gave generous gifts could expect a most favorable verdict even if their lives had been laden with sin. It would have been ridiculous if it had not been so terribly sad.

But God will soon put an end to these scandalous doings.

20. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken. God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I will come upon your cushions where you snare souls so that they fly, and I tear them away from your arms and send forth the souls which you trap, souls that will fly (to freedom).

21. And I will tear asunder your veils and save My people from your hand, that they no longer serve as a trap in your hand, and they will recognize that I am God.

22. Because you have disheartened the righteous with (your) lie, when I did not wish to cause him

לֹכֶן כְּהַאֲמָר | אֲרֵנִי יְהוָה  
הַנְּגִנִּי אֶל-כְּסֻתּוֹתֵיכֶנָּה אֲשֶׁר  
אָתְּנָה מִצְרָרוֹת שָׁם אַתִּי  
הַגְּפָשָׁות לְפָרָחוֹת וּבְקָרְעָתִי אֶתְּנָם  
מַעַל וּרְעוּתִיכֶם וּשְׁלַחְתִּי אַתִּי  
הַגְּפָשָׁות אֲשֶׁר אֶתְּנָם מִצְרָרוֹת  
אָתִינְפְּשִׁים לְפָרָחוֹת:

וּבְקָרְעָתִי אַתִּי-מִסְפְּחָתֵיכֶם  
וְהַצְלָתִי אַתִּי-עַמִּי מִירָכֵן וּלְאַיְרָיוִי  
עוֹד בַּיּוֹרְכוֹן לְמַצְוָה וּוּדָעָתוֹ כִּי  
אַנְּיִי יְהוָה:

יְשַׁעַן הַכְּאֹות לְבִדְצָרִיק שָׁקָר

*Verse 20.* They snared the souls of their clients with the mysterious "cushions" which they wrapped around their shoulders. They made them believe that, without their help, these unfortunates would be subject to all sorts of unknown forces (most likely including that of God!). They claimed that they could liberate the people from the power of alien, pernicious forces. Armed with the "wings of freedom" around their shoulders, they would be able to soar toward the happy future that awaited them. The truth, however, was that these souls had fallen prey to the stranglehold of strong and greedy arms (hence the masculine forms זְרַעַתְכֶם and זְרַעַתְכֶת). But God will pluck these souls which, after all, are His, from the seducers' arms. Once the fatal influence of these seducers has been destroyed forever, He will release the victims from their imprisonment and give them the wings of true freedom so that they may, once again, unsold these wings in their full power. (This may explain the masculine plural for נְשָׁמָה that occurs in no other scriptural passage.)

*Verse 21.* God will also mend their veils which they used so skillfully (hence the masculine form טְבֻחָתְכֶם) to ensnare (בְּזָהָב) those who believed in them. The time will come when they will be forced to admit their weakness (hence the feminine endings in this verse).

*Verse 22.* The Word of God could not possibly use the term צְדָקָה for a man who has consulted these magicians. It rather describes the enormous influence these women must have wielded over the masses if even the righteous whose

pain, and (you) have strengthened the hands of the wicked lest he turn back from his evil ways, in that you revived him to life.

**23.** Therefore you will never more see nothingness and pursue fortune-telling; I will save My people from your hand and you shall recognize that I am God.

**Chap. 14.** 1. There came to me men from the elders of Israel, and they stayed before me.

ואני לא הקאכתיו ולחזק ירנו  
רשע לבתיר שוב מדרך הצע  
להחיתתו:

2. לבן שואל את חונחה וקסם לא-  
תקסמנה עוזר והצלע אתחעמי  
מירכו וירעטו פיראנין יהוה:

יד ו. ויבוא אליו אנשים מזקנין  
ישראל וישבו לפניו: פ

faith was still deeply rooted in the truth of God's almighty power were filled with fear (כאה) and pain (כאב) as they saw the growing power of falsehood depriving the lawless of those last remnants of moral awareness that might perhaps have led them back to God. But the time will come when the faith of the righteous will be vindicated.

*Verse 23.* On that day when God will arise and come to the rescue of His people, they will no longer dare spread lies and perform their magic acts. The Prophet does not disclose to them the fate that awaits them (see Verse 9). But then, might not their fortune-telling skills be sufficient for them, at least, to surmise, on their own, the future that lies in store for them?

**Chapter 14, Verse 1.** The "prophets and prophetesses" were compelled to hear their death sentence from the mouth of Ezekiel. When their adherents did Ezekiel the honor of visiting him, they, too, were to notice the difference between the language of the so-called "prophets" and the terms in which Ezekiel couched his message. For Ezekiel described the spiritual condition of these "men from among the elders of Israel" so accurately and convincingly that even those who believed in the pseudo-prophets thought it expedient to try to secure Ezekiel's services also. Though, as this entire chapter indicates, they continued to be steadfast followers of the opposing "trend" of prophecy, they also wanted to hear what Ezekiel had to say. Perhaps the stern words of censure recorded in the previous chapters had left their mark. The "leaders" felt that one would do well not to ignore a man who could use such forceful language. *דיבר:* Note the singular form. It implies that all these men who visited Ezekiel were motivated by one and the same idea. *וישבו למשי:* There is no need to explain their intent in visiting Ezekiel. Perhaps, too, they initially sat at the

2. Then the word of God came to me:

3. Son of mankind, these men have carried their outrages into their own heart, and the stumbling block of their sin they have placed before their face—and I should let Myself be sought by them?

4. Therefore, speak with them and say to them, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His

וְיֹהָיְךָ דְּבָרֵיהֶנֶּה אֲלֵי לְאָמֵר:

כִּי־אַתָּם הָאָנָשִׁים הַאֱלֹהֶה הַעֲלָלִים  
גָּלְלִיכֶם עַל־לְפָנֶם וּמְכֻשֵּׂל עַוְנָם  
גַּתְתֶּנוּ נֶכֶחֶ פְּנִימָתֶם הַאֲדָרֶשׁ אַרְנָשׁ  
לְהַמָּס:

לְבָנָן דְּבָר־אָוֹתֶם וּמְאָמָרֶת  
אֲלָרִים בְּהַאֲקָרֶר | אַרְנִי יְהֹוָה

Prophet's feet only as a silent audience, with the intention of revealing the true purpose of their visit only later on, very gradually. But the Word of God did not permit them to carry out their plans.

*Verse 3.* The Word of God has no use for "visits" of this sort. These are men who have allowed their abominations (גְּלֹלִים, see Chapter 6, Verse 4) to enter their very hearts (עַל־לְבָנָן, "to come into their minds;" hence the *hiphil* form). They have turned all their thoughts to evil forces whose worship should fill any truly pure and moral person with disgust. They regarded טַכְשָׁל (Chapter 7, Verse 19) the very thing that had caused them to stumble as the one great purpose of their lives. Should such men, indeed, seek Me? "The meaning of דָרְשׁ אֶלְקָתֶם is 'to seek instruction and help from God.' Accordingly, this expression implies all the relationships which every phase of our lives and actions must assume and maintain toward God if He is indeed to be *our* God" (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 18,5). Only he who seeks God's guidance has the right to turn to Him also for help. But are these men indeed seeking God's guidance?

*Verse 4.* דְּבָר־אָוֹת: Speak with them. Confront them so that, with the Word of God, you may make them understand the madness of their evil schemes. One who comes before the נָבִיא with גְּלֹלִים in his heart, with purposes of his own devising that deny the very existence of God, perceives the נָבִיא as a heathen-type prophet whom he expects to secure for him the protection of the deity he fears, or at least to ward off the perils that might arise for him from that pagan god. The idea is to make the deity amenable to the suppliant's wishes. That is how these people view the role of Ezekiel; in their eyes he is just one more prophet "among the other prophets." This is the significance of the passive form, מְגַזֵּה, which would otherwise be difficult to understand. The meaning of יְהֹוָה is not only to "answer" but to "depend upon" another (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 16,6). The prophet's influence should be

loving kindness in justice: Each one from the house of Israel who carries his outrages to his own heart, and who places the stumbling block of his sin before his face and comes to the prophet—I, God, have long since felt ready to answer him—he comes with the abundance of his outrages;

**5.** To seize the house of Israel in their heart, who have become estranged from Me, all of them through their outrages.

**6.** Therefore, speak to the house of Israel, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving

אֲישׁ אִישׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲשֶׁר  
יַעֲלֵה אֶת־גָּלוֹן אֶל־לְבוּנָה  
וּמְכַשֵּׁל עַנוּנוֹשִׁים נְכַח פָּנוּזָבָא  
אֶל־הַגְּבֵיהָ אָנָּי וְהִתְהַגֵּנִיתִי לְ  
בָּה בְּרַכְתְּגָלוּלִים:

5. לְמַעַן תִּפְשֶׁר אֶת־בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּלִבְנֵם אֲשֶׁר נָרוּ מִעְלֵי בְּגָלוּלִים  
כְּלָמָס:

6. לְכָן אָמַר אֶל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בָּה אָמַר אָדָנִי וְהִתְהַגֵּנִי שָׁבֵךְ

נא קרי.

perverted to help transform (by force, if necessary) the freewilled, "active" answer of God (יען) into a "passive" (נענית) acquiescence in the suppliant's demands.

In contrast to this we read the bitter irony of the words: ה. י. אָנָּי הַנְּעַנְיִתִי לְזַה (and the very mention of My Name should be sufficient to wipe out every taint of paganism for all time), have given them My answer (נענית) long ago, that answer which, in their delusion, they thought they could change according to their own wishes through the influence of a prophet.

**בָּא כָּרְבָּ גָּלוּלִים:** Any individual harboring such attitudes has supplied the answer to his wishes by (בָּה) the way of life which he has chosen and which he is unwilling to give up. Since he comes (בָּא) before the Presence of God with גָּלוּלִים, God has no answer to give him other than the one he himself might have learned long ago from the Divine Book of the Torah.

**Verse 5.** This brazen attempt to secure God's aid even while indulging in these abominations is all the more reprehensible because it serves to obscure true God-consciousness among the broad masses and has alienated the heart (לבם) of the house of Israel from the pure truth set down for them by God. Our Sages explain this verse as follows: בעבדה ורבה מהשנה (**קידושין לט:**) Thus far the spirit of kedushah and tzadakah may have contaminated only the heart of Israel, God regards even such heretical thoughts as already tantamount to apostasy in practice.

**Verse 6.** The Prophet therefore addresses words of stern rebuke to בָּתְהַגְּנִיתִי (**ישָׂרָאֵל**) (Verse 5), to bring it to its senses because all the Jewish people is now

kindness in justice: Turn back and cause [others] to turn back from your outrages, and turn your face away from all your abominations.

7. For, each one from the house of Israel and from the stranger who lives in Israel who parts from Me, who carries his outrages to his own heart and places the stumbling block of his sin before his face, and comes to the prophet that he seek an answer from Me for him—I, God, have long since by Myself decided to answer him:

8. I turn My face against that man and cause him to become desolate, that he become a sign and countless examples, and I cause

וְהַשִּׁיבוּ מַעַל גָּלוּכֶם וּמַעַל כָּל־  
תוֹעֲבָתֵיכֶם הַשִּׁיבוּ פְנֵיכֶם:

7. כִּי אִישׁ אֲיוֹשׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וּמִתְגָּר אֲשֶׁר־יָגַר בִּיְשָׂרָאֵל וּמִגְּרָה  
סְאַחֲרָיו וּמַעַל גָּלוּכָו אֶל־לִבָּו  
וּמִכְשָׁול עַזְנוֹ יְשִׁוּם נְכָחָ פָּנָיו וּבָאָ  
אַל־הַגְּבוּאָ לְדַרְשָׁלָו בְּיַאֲנֵי וְתַהֲ  
גַּעֲנָרְדוּ בָּי

8. וּנְתַתִּיו פָנֵי בָאִישׁ הַהֹזֵא  
וְהַשְׁמְתִירָה לְאוֹת וּלְמַשְׁלִים

endangered by the attitude of these supposedly "God-seeking" individuals. שׁוּבוּ: Only he who will himself take the path that leads to God and will do his utmost to persuade also others to decide to mend their ways (הַשִּׁיבוּ) has the right to come into God's presence.

*Verses 7–8.* Not so he whose spirit has become estranged from God and whose actions are a mockery of the word of God, but who nevertheless has the effrontery to call upon the Prophet for help in attaining God's nearness. God, Whom he thought to make amenable to his wishes (גַעֲנָה לוֹ), has doomed him to destruction long ago by His (God's) own free-willed decision (כִּי). It is significant that Verse 4: אֲישׁ אֲיוֹשׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל; Verse 7: אֲישׁ אֲיוֹשׁ מִבֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל and Verse 8: גַעֲנָה פָנֵי וּמִגְּרָה חֲרֵצָה quote words taken from Leviticus 17,3, and 8–10. This textual similarity implies that the same Word of God which has decreed the penalty of כָּרְתָה for any attempt to introduce heathen practices and immoral ways (שְׁחִיתַת חֹזֶק, אֲכִילַת רַטָּה) into Judaism has decreed כָּרְתָה for them as well: their lives will end in utter ruin and their example (מַלְלֵיָה) will become a deterrent for any others who would dare trifle with the truth set forth by God.

"Men from among the elders of Israel" have sought out Ezekiel so that he might help them "seek" God. But in reply Ezekiel simply points to the

him to become uprooted from the midst of My people, and you will recognize that I am God.

**9.** And the prophet who lets himself be deceived and speaks a word—I, God, have long since opened the mind of that prophet—then I incline My hand over him and destroy him from the midst of My people Israel.

**10.** And they bear their sin—as the sin of the seeker, so the sin of the prophet is judged.

**11.** Lest the house of Israel continue to drift away from Me, and they defile themselves through all their wrongdoings. They are to become My people, so that I may

והכרתו מטוֹךְ עַמִּי וַיַּעֲתֹה כִּי־  
אָנִי יוֹהֵה:

וְהַבְּיאָ קִידּוּשָׁה וְרַבְּרַבְּ רַבְּ  
אָנִי יוֹהֵה פָּתִיחַת הַגְּבִיא הַהְוָא  
וְגַפְתִּיחַ אֶת־צִרוֹ עַלְיוֹ וְהַשְׁמַרְתִּיחַ  
מַטוֹּךְ עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

וְגַנְשָׂאו עַזְנוֹם כְּעֻזָּן הַרְלָשׁ כְּעֻזָּן  
הַגְּבִיא וְיְהִי:

וְלֹמְעָן לְאִירְתָּנוּ עֹזְרַ בֵּית־  
יִשְׂרָאֵל מִאָחָרִי וְלְאִירְטָמָא עֹזְרַ  
בְּכָל־פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם וְהַיּוֹלֵד לְעַם וְאָנִי

passages in the Law that decree the Divine penalty of כרת for them. By answering them in this manner, Ezekiel has proven himself to be a true נביא.

**Verses 9–10.** From those who pretended to be “prophets” they would, of course, have received a different answer, the kind of answer they really wanted to hear. But then, with every foolish word of theirs that had nothing in common with the Word of God’s will, these “prophets” would have been guilty of ליל (crimes) (כרת) (this expression is frequently used for these “prophets”) would have suffered the same just punishment from which they pretend they could save their followers. **אָנִי הַ פָּתִיחַי:** The heart of a true prophet must be “open” (for an explanation of זהה, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 9.27; סזה related to פָתַח “to open”) to accept nothing else but the truths established by God (see Jeremiah 20.7: פָתַחַנִי הַ צוֹּמָה). It must “remain closed” to any alien influence, or else the people of Israel will be in danger of losing the most sacred values of their existence.

**Verse 11.** When the false prophets vanish, their followers will also be gone. Their illusions will be destroyed and the one path to God’s nearness will emerge before them in full clarity. God’s people will then no longer be willing to break the faith with God and to taint its God-given purity by straying from His paths. Then, at long last, the nation of God will understand, for all time, the significance of the precepts set down by its God: **וְהַיּוּ לִי לְמַמֵּת.** After a long

become God to them, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

12. Then the word of God came to me:

13. Son of mankind, when a land sins against Me to commit faithlessness, and I incline My hand over it and break its staff

אהיה לך לאלהים נאם אָנֹם אֶרְצִי  
יְהוָה פ'

12. וַיֹּאמֶר רְבָרְיוֹתָה אֵלֵי לֵאמֹר:

13. בָּנָּוֹתָם אֶרְצִי בַּי תְּחַטְּא  
לֹא לְמַעַל-מַעַל וְגַטְתִּי בְּרוּ  
עֲלֵיכָה וְשִׁבְרַתִּי לְךָ מַפְתַּח-לְקָם

and foolish "search" for God the people will have found Him, at last, in truth:  
ואני אהיה לך לאלקם.

*Verse 12.* Having silenced his adversaries, the Prophet, undaunted by the obstacles that beset him at every turn, resumes the mission given him to perform in the *golah*. In a succession of momentous chapters (14–21) we see God "opening" Ezekiel's "mouth" (Chapter 3,27). Let the false prophets and prophetesses continue their evil activities, feeding Jerusalem and its Sanctuary, the state and the spiritual homeland of the nation, with false hopes for the future. The words כה אמר א' נ' (Chapter 3, 27), which are the preamble to all that follows, have anticipated that possibility: "Whoever wishes to listen, let him listen; he who will not listen, let him not listen."

In moving, intense and graphic detail Verses 13–20 now introduce the thoughts to be further developed in Verses 21–23.

*Verse 13.* ארץ: This term does not necessarily envisage the Holy Land alone. No country can ignore its bond of obedience to God for any length of time without becoming subject to the wrath. חוכמתה. But how much more does it apply to a land such as ארץ ישראל, in which every transgression of God's precepts becomes a sin against God, a breach of trust committed by מלכיה הנאים priests! For precisely this is the meaning of טלית: He who is expected to think and act in the spirit of priesthood (טלית is the word used for the mantle worn by the high priest), but in fact only wears the outer garb of a priest to disguise his true character (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 5,15).

The punishments are listed in the order in which they occur in the text; רוח (Leviticus 26,19–20), רוחה (ibid., 22), דבר (ibid.) and דבר (ibid.). The blows fall in growing intensity. Only those who can truly say that they have led a life marked by adherence to their God-ordained duties have a right to expect that they might be spared from God's wrath. Ezekiel reaches back into the history of mankind to recall the figure of Noach who, precisely because

of bread, and send forth hunger against it and destroy its man and beast;

**14.** And if these three men were in her midst: Noach, Daniel and Iyob, they would be able to save their souls by their righteousness, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**15.** Supposing I let evil beasts pass through the land and rob it of

וְהַשְׁלִיחָתֶרֶבֶת רָעֵב וּהַכְּרַתִּי  
מִפְנַת אָדָם וּבְחַמְמָה:

**14.** וְהִיוֹ שֶׁלֶשֶת הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֶלְהָה  
בְּתוֹךְהָ נֶחָם הַגָּנָל וְאַיּוֹב הַפָּה  
בְּצָדְקָתָם יִגְּזֻלּוּ נֶפֶשָׁם נָאָם אָרוֹן  
יְהֹוָה:

**15.** לְוִיחִיָּה דָּרָה אַעֲבֵיר בָּאָרֶץ

of the righteous life he led, was allowed to survive the flood that wiped out all the rest of mankind except for him and his immediate family. Closer to his own time, Ezekiel then summons the saintly figure of Daniel. Think how often he must have reminded his people in exile of the Jewish strength of character shown by Daniel at the court of the king of Babylonia (Daniel 2)! And if we accept the view stated in the Talmud (בבא בתרא טו) that Job was a non-Jew, חסיד היה באמות העולם becoming an example of the heroic greatness that can be achieved also by men outside the Jewish people who, in an age of widespread corruption, remained conscious of their God-given human dignity and acted accordingly (דוּרוֹ שֶׁל אַיּוֹב שָׁפֹךְ בָּוֹמָה הַהָּה), then we will readily understand why Ezekiel, as the בֶן אָדָם, "son of mankind," whose eye was upon all humanity, chose to cite Job as the third in the series of great men who were found worthy of surviving the total destruction of the society in which they had lived. (If, on the other hand, we adopt the view that Job was a Jew, the chronological sequence in which Ezekiel names him would support the view that Job בימי אחשורוש היה or בימי נבוכדנצר היה or perhaps even during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar or perhaps even during the reign of Ahasuerus).

*Verses 13–14.* God will send famine to a land as a punishment for the arrogance prevailing in it. Only the righteous will then escape with their lives. Would these righteous individuals, perhaps, be able to save their own sons and daughters from God's punishment, which they were wicked enough to deserve? The Prophet leaves the question unanswered. For an explanation of the *הַשְׁלִיחָתֶרֶבֶת*, a *hiphil* [active causative] form, see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 8, 17.

*Verses 15–16.* As corruption mounts in a land—any land (hence the word used here is בָּאָרֶץ, as distinct from הארץ הַזֹּאת הַזֹּאת in Verse 17), God's retribution

its children, and it became a desolation with none to pass through it for fear of the beasts;

16. These three men in her midst—as I live, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—can they save their sons, their daughters? They can save themselves alone, but the land will be a desolation.

17. Or, if I bring the sword upon this land and I say: Sword, pass through the land, and I will destroy its man and beast;

18. And these three men, if they were in her midst—as I live, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—they cannot save their sons and daughters, only themselves can they save.

ושפלהה והוותה שטמה טבלי  
עובר מפעני הארץ:

16. שלשת האנשים האלה  
בתוכה חיראנו נאם ארני יהוה  
asmibneim vasmibneot ya'alei ha'mah  
לברם ינצלו והארץ תהיה  
שטמה:

17. או חרב אכיא על הארץ  
ההיא ואמךתי חרב מעבר הארץ  
והכרתי מטנה ארם ובנה:

18. ושלשת האנשים האלה  
בתוכה חיראנו נאם ארני יהוה  
לא ינצלו בנים וبنנות כי הם לבני  
וינצלו:

becomes harsher still. Haughty men will be forced to see wild beasts lose their natural fear of humans. The victims fall; the streets of the cities are deserted; man has been forced to yield his place to wild beasts. And then the Prophet anxiously raises anew the question whether the righteous would be able to save at least the lives of their own children. And this time he must answer his own question in the negative.

<sup>17</sup>: see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 50,15.

Verse 17–18. As corruption reaches even greater dimensions, the punishment, too, assumes increasing severity. The enemy's sword rages among victims who are utterly defenseless, for who could offer resistance if the massacre was commanded by none other than God Himself? In this case, emphasis must be placed on that which did not require such explicit stress in the punishments mentioned earlier: **חוטר חרב עוצר הארץ**. God Himself has given the order; hence, even though he may not know it, the triumphant enemy and his sword are merely performing the will of God (see also **ידין**). Here, the catastrophic intensification of the punishment is reflected in the categorical

**19.** Or, if I send the plague upon this land and pour out My anger in blood over them, to destroy its man and beast;

**20.** And if Noach, Daniel and Iyob lived in her midst—as I live, such is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—can they save one son, one daughter? They in their own righteousness will save their soul.

**21.** For, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—if I sent My four evil judgments, sword,

19. אוֹ רַבְּרָא אֲשֶׁלָּחַ אֶל־הָאָרֶץ  
הַחִיא וְשִׁפְכַּתִּי חַמְתִּי עַלְיהָ בְּרֵם  
לְהַכְּרִית מִפְנֵנָה אֶרְם וּבְנָמָה:

20. וְנַחַת דָּנָאֵל וְאַיּוֹב בְּתוֹכָה חַיָּה  
אָנָּי נָאֵם אָדָנִי יְהוָה אֱסִיבָן אָסָּם־  
בָּת וְצִילּוּ תְּמָה בְּצִרְקָתָם יְצִילּוּ  
בְּנָפְשָׁם: פ

21. כִּי כִּי אָמַר אָדָנִי יְהוָה  
אָפָּף כִּירָאָרְכָּעַת שִׁפְטִי | הָרָעִים  
חַרְבָּה וְרַעֲבָה וְחַיָּה רַעַל וְרַבְּרָא

statement that forecloses every possibility of escape. the righteous will not be able to save even their own children.

*Verses 19–20.* When men have become so corrupt that they will not come to their senses even at this point, God decides to take the final step that will result in their total annihilation. The sword of the triumphant foe drives the frantic populace into the cities, the pestilence rages, and God's wrath is poured out over men, women and children alike; they all are doomed to death (see Ezekiel 38,22 וּנְשִׁפְטָה אָתָּה בְּדָבָר וּנְדָם). The last survivors emerge from the deluge of blood, and now the Prophet, in a final outburst, invokes the memory of Noach, Daniel and Job. If these men were alive at the time of this catastrophe, אָתָּה בְּתִיצְלָה would they be able to save at least one child of theirs—only one son or one daughter? Even if their children had been deserving of a thousand deaths, would not the heart of a parent bleed at the thought of having to give his very last child to die? But God has decreed otherwise; His righteousness demands it: **הָם בְּגַדְקָתָם יְצִילוּ נָשָׁם**.

*Verse 21.* All the Divine judgments mentioned above have already descended upon Jerusalem, since the sad conditions for which the Torah foretold them have, alas, materialized in full. And while the *golah* is still under the spell of its illusions, the Prophet gazes upon the smouldering ruins of a nation destroyed by the wrath of God. He hears the death rattle of a nation condemned to die for its shameless neglect of its priestly calling on sacred soil (Verse 13).

In enumerating the four Divine judgments in this verse, the Prophet begins with **חַרְבָּה**. In this, too, he follows the order of the *תוֹכוֹתָה*, in which the predictions

hunger, evil beasts and pestilence upon Yerushalayim to destroy man and beast from her midst;

22. Behold, there remains a scant remnant of those that were led away, sons and daughters, they will set forth to you, and you will see their way and their manner of action, and you will change your attitude because of the disaster which I have brought upon

שְׁלֹחַתִי אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלָם לְהַכְרִית  
מִפְנַתְּךָ אֶתְּךָ וּבְכַמָּה:

וְהִנֵּה נוֹתְרָה־בָּהּ פָּלָתָה  
הַמּוֹצָאִים בָּנִים וּבָנֹתָה הַגָּם  
וּזְאֲמִים אֲלֵיכֶם וּרְאִיתֶם אֶת־  
דָּרְכֶם וְאֶת־עֲלִילָותֶם וּנְחַמְתֶּם  
עַל־הָרָעָה אֲשֶׁר הָבָאתִי עָלָךְ

of דְּבָרָה, חָרֵב, חִיה רְעוּה, רְעֵב (Leviticus 26:19–25) are preceded by Verses 16–17, where we are told that the people of Israel, defeated by their enemies, will be ruled by those who hate them. Accordingly, חָרֵב was mentioned first in the series of Divine visitations: first, Israel came under the rule of alien nations (see Hirsch Commentary, *ibid.*); after that, they succumbed to the sword of their conquerors. The חָרֵב that followed only completed the process begun by חָרֵב before רְעֵב.

*Verse 22.* **חִנָּה:** But the unexpected comes to pass. Not everyone meets the death of which he would be deserving. A remnant of “sons and daughters” whom not even the merits of such men as Noach, Daniel or Job could have saved manages to escape to the *golah*. There, the behavior of these remnants (פָּלָתָה; see Hirsch Commentary on Psalm 14,1; also on Exodus 10,2), their total estrangement from God’s precepts, works a change in the attitude of the *golah*. The word **חִנָּה** can mean either “consolation” or “repentance;” in either case it denotes a complete change in one’s previous view of a given thing or situation. (See Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 50,21). When they first learned of the catastrophe that had befallen their homeland and Jerusalem, the people in the *golah* may well have felt that, perhaps, God’s punishment had been too harsh. But the conduct of the refugee survivors, along with the horrifying details of the disaster that had befallen their homeland, also gave the *golah* an insight into the corruption that had brought about the catastrophe. The result is a drastic change in the *golah*’s views. But such a transformation will be possible only if, at that moment, the people in the *golah* have already experienced a spiritual rebirth as God’s own people and thus, aware of their life’s true purpose, are ready to let the Prophet guide them to the path of life. And this indeed comes to pass. The catastrophe has swept away all the obstacles which until then had thwarted the Prophet’s efforts. The more their own lives are irradiated once again by God’s truth, the more they shudder

Yerushalayim, (see) all that I have brought upon it;

**23.** And they will bring about your change of attitude, for you will see their way and the manner of their actions, and you will recognize that I have not done in vain all that I have carried out against it, thus is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 15.** 1. The word of God came to me:

יְרוּשָׁלָם אַתְּ בֶּלְאָשֵׁר הַכָּחֵת  
עֲלֵיכֶם:

וְנִחְמֹמוּ אֶתְכֶם פִּירְתְּרֹאוּ אֶת־  
רְرָכֶם וְאֶת־צְלִילָותֶם וְיַרְעָתֶם כִּי־  
לֹא חָנַם עֲשִׂיתִי אַתְּ בֶּלְאָשֵׁר־  
עֲשִׂיתִי בָּהּ נָאַם אַלְנֵי נָהָהָה:

טו וְיָהִי רְבָרְדִּילָה אֱלֵי לְאַמְרָה:

at the picture of utter depravity presented by the refugees. But, at last, they understand why it was necessary for Jerusalem to suffer such a harsh fate: **מִן כָּל אֲשֶׁר הַכָּחֵת פָּלֵה.**

**Verse 23:** *Now that you feel comforted.* During the reign of Jeconiah, a Divinely-ordained fate, which they had neither understood nor appreciated at the time, had brought them prematurely into exile (see Malbim). In their yearning for their homeland they had envied the lot of those who still lived there in illusory independence. They lamented the fate that had driven them into exile. But now, having seen the full extent to which their unfortunate brethren had strayed from all the true values of life only in order to prolong their illusion of political survival, they learned to bless the Divine Providence. **כִּי לֹא חָנַם עֲשִׂיתִי אַתְּ כָּל אֲשֶׁר עֲשִׂיתִי בָּהּ** which, in the wisdom of its foresight, had spared them from this fate and had chosen them to work, in concert with Divinely-inspired men, for the rebuilding of their nation's future.

**Verse 22,** *and, then, supplies the reason why God permitted also some of the guilty to survive the catastrophe.* As our Sages comment to Michah 2,1: (see Yalkut) **לֹא נִשְׁתִּירָה אֶלָּא בְּכוֹתַהָּא זָדְקִים וְזָדְקִינִּותָהּ שָׁהָם** God saw even these depraved "sons and daughters" as the fathers and mothers that would raise a new generation of purity.

**Chapter 15.** God's judgments have descended upon Jerusalem with devastating force (Chapter 14). Chapter 15 employs an incisive parable to explain God's reasons for this action.

2. Son of mankind, what will become of the wood of the vine among all the trees, the tendril that it was among the trees of the forest?

3. Will wood be taken from it to fashion it for [some useful] work? Will a peg be taken from it to hang some vessel upon it?

4. Behold, it is given to the fire as fuel; the fire has consumed both its ends; its middle part is charred; can it still be used for [any useful] work?

5. Behold, [even] when it was whole, it could not be fashioned for [any useful] work. Now that the fire has consumed it, now that it is charred, how could it be fashioned for [any useful] work?

6. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His

בָּנְדָקִים מִהִיאֵנָה עַזְּהַפְּנִים  
מִכְלָעַן הַזּוֹרֶה אֲשֶׁר הִנֵּה  
בְּעֵצִי הַיּוֹרֵד:

בְּנִקְחַת מִפְּנֵנו עַז לְעַשׂוֹת  
לְמִלְאָכָה אֲסִיקְתָּה מִפְּנֵנו יְתָר  
לְתִלּוֹת עַלְיוֹ כְּלַבְּלִי:

גַּנְעַב לְאַשׁ נָטוּן לְאַכְלָה אֶת שְׁנִי  
קָצְוְתָיו אַכְלָה הַאַשׁ וְתוּכוֹ נָחַר  
הַיְצָלָח לְמִלְאָכָה:

דַּגְנָה בְּהִוּתוֹ תְּמִימָה לֹא יַעֲשֶׂה  
לְמִלְאָכָה אֶפְכִּידָשׁ אַכְלָתָה  
וַיָּחַר גַּנְעַשָּׂה עַזְזָה לְמִלְאָכָה: ס

וְלֹבֶן בָּה אָמַר אַרְגְּנִינְגְּהוּ בְּאַשְׁדָר

*Verses 2–5.* What will become of the wood from the vine which, even when it still bore grapes, was regarded merely as a *זֹרֶה*, a “vine,” a tendril among the sturdy trees of the forest? Even while it produced grapes, the vine was never described as timber or as a tree trunk in its own right but as long, trailing tendrils conducting the sap that will finally enter the berry to turn it into a ripe fruit (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 43,11). What, then, will become of the trunk when the tendrils growing from it have run wild and produce no more fruit? Once that happens, the vine will be only a worthless, stunted growth, not fit for use in the manufacture of any object, not even to serve as a peg. It will be fit only for firewood. But what if it has already been burned at both ends and only its charred (*חרס niph'a*) middle part has been retrieved from the flames? What else could then be done except to throw that piece back into the fire so that it, too, will be consumed altogether?

This parable seals Israel's fate.

*Verse 6.* Israel was the noblest of all plants, “the vine that God brought forth from Mitzrayim for Himself” (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 80,9). No other plant could compare to it as long as it brought forth its delectable

loving kindness in justice: Even as the wood of the vine among the trees of the forest which I have given to the fire for fuel, so have I given [away] the inhabitants of Yerushalayim.

7. I have set My countenance against them; they have escaped from the fire [but] the fire shall consume them, and you shall know that I am הִנֵּה when I set My countenance against them.

8. I shall give the land to [become] desolate, for they were guilty of faithlessness, is the utterance of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in His execution of justice.

עַזְדָּגָנוֹן בַּעַז הַיּוֹר אֲשֶׁר  
נְתַתִּי לְאַשׁ לְאַכְלָה בֶּן נְתַתִּי  
אֲתִידִישְׁכִּי יְרוּשָׁלָם:

7. וְנְתַתִּי אֲתִידִישְׁנִי בְּהַמִּקְדָּשׁ  
יְצָאוּ וְהַאֲשׁ תְּאַכְלָם וְיַרְעַתָּם כִּי  
אַנְּנוּ וְהָווּ בְּשׂוּמִי אֲתִידִישְׁנִי בְּהַמִּקְדָּשׁ

8. וְנְתַתִּי אֲתִידִהָאָרֶץ שְׁמַקְמָה יְצָאן  
קְשֻׁלָּו מַעַל נָאָס אַרְנוּ וְהָווּ פָ

fruit for God alone. But God Himself had to act as its gardener, planting it on soil set aside and cultivated especially for it (Isaiah 5), the only soil on which such a vine could flourish and fulfill its purpose. However, Israel rejected that soil. It wanted to be a tree "among the other trees of the forest," not realizing that, once it did so, it would become a wild, sterile vine (Jeremiah 2,21), fit for nothing else but firewood. Then it would be worth less than any other timber in the forest (hence the singular form בַּעַז הַיּוֹר).

*Verse 7. טהאש יְצָאוּ:* The fire has already consumed both ends of the vine. The northern end had been destroyed by the flames of Assyria, and the elite of Judah in the south had been carried into captivity by the Babylonians. Did that pitiful remnant, saved for the present from the flames but already charred within, really think it still had a right to independence as long as it was so rotten within? The Targum significantly interprets טהאש יְצָאוּ to mean, "they have shirked the words of My fiery Law," וְאַכְלָם "and therefore the nations shall now consume them with the power of fire."

God has turned His countenance against those who broke faith with Him (Verse 8). He has consigned the worthless timber to the flames. But by so doing, He has revealed Himself to His people as הִנֵּה (Verse 7). It is through fire and desert wasteland that God will lead His people toward a new life.

**Chap. 16.** 1. The word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, make Yerushalayim aware of her abominations.

3. And say: Thus has my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, said to Yerushalayim: Your origins and the circumstances of

טו. וְהִי דְבָר־יְהוָה אֲלֵי לְאַמֶּר:

טז. בָּנָדָם הַוְּרֹע אֶת־יְרוּשָׁלָם  
אֶת־תוֹעֲבָתָה:

טז. וְאָמַרְתָּ כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹנִי יְהוָה  
לִירוּשָׁלָם קָבְרָתָךְ וּמְלֹדָתְךָ

**Chapter 16.** Chapter 15 only provides the background for the overwhelming scene which Chapter 16 depicts for us. The purpose of the present chapter is to hold up a mirror before Jerusalem's eyes so that she may behold her true image and shudder in horror at the sight (Verse 2). But in order to achieve this end, the Prophet shows her, at the same time, scenes from her infancy and youth so that she may see the striking contrast between her pure and luminous features of long ago and the ravages her subsequent dissolute life have left upon her face. We are now to read the soul-stirring history of the Jewish people from its very beginning until the moment at which God consigns the decaying, worthless "timber" to the flames.

**Verse 3.** (from סְכֻחָה=סְכֻחָךְ, "to scoop out" or from כָּרָה "to engrave") refers to the original "material" from which Israel was "carved," as it were. מָלוֹתָה=מָלוֹתָךְ, i.e., its origins. The reference here is to the circumstances of Israel's birth. The use of the plural implies several factors that had a part in the origins of the Jewish people.

The origins of the Jewish people hark back to the land of the Canaanites, and though the land of its actual provenance was Aram (see Genesis, Chapter 11), it was only thanks to Divine Providence that Canaan had not become the true homeland of Israel's progenitor, Abraham. Hence, in considering the origins of the Jewish people, one ought to contemplate the thread of history going back to ancient Canaan. Also, consider the lowly circumstances that surrounded the beginnings of the Jewish nation (as implied by the "defective" spelling of מָלוֹתָךְ).

True, Israel's father had been Abraham, and his mother Sarah, but it was solely thanks to God's wisdom as the supreme Educator of men and nations that the Jewish people did not have an Emorite father and a Hittite mother. Israel's origins point to Canaan; at the time of its birth it was surrounded by Emorites and Hittites and its precarious life might well have been extinguished before it truly had a chance to begin.

your birth—from the land of the Canaanite; your father the Emorite; your mother, the Hittite.

4. As for the circumstances of your birth: on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed in water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt, nor were you swaddled.

5. No eye looked upon you with compassion, to do even one of these things for you with mercy. You were cast upon the field, left in utter despair on the day you were born.

6. Then I passed by you and saw you, trampled down (about to expire) in your own blood. And

**פָּארֵץ הַכְּנָעָן אֶבְּיַד הַאֲמֹרִי  
וְאֶמְרֵךְ חֲתִיתָ:**

4. וּמוֹלְדוֹתֵיךְ בָּיוֹם הַוּלָרָת אַתְּךְ  
לְאַכְּרָת שְׁרֵךְ וּבְמִים לְאַדְחָצָת  
לְמַשְׁעֵי וּמַמְלָחָה לֹא הַמְלָחָת  
וְחַחְלָל לֹא חַתְּלָתָ:

5. לְאַדְחָסָה עַלְיוֹךְ עַן לְעַשְׂוֹת לֹךְ  
אַחֲת מְאֻלָּה לְחַמְלָה עַלְיוֹת שְׁלָבִי  
אַלְפָנִי הַשְׁרוֹה בְּגַעַל נַפְשָׁךְ בְּיוֹם  
הַלְּרָת אַתְּךְ:

6. וְאַעֲבָר עַלְיוֹךְ וְאַרְאָךְ  
קַתְבּוֹסָת בְּרַמְיוֹךְ וְאָמֵר לֹךְ

However, Israel's true birth (this is implied by the "complete" spelling of תַּבְּרָא in Verse 4) still lay in the future. But let us consider the unprecedented conditions under which that birth was to take place!

VerSES 4-5. וְהַלְּרָה definitely refers "to the midwife's profession" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 40,20); כָּרָת (with a *dagesh*: *pu'al*); שָׁר is the navel or umbilical cord; מַשְׁעֵי is the cleansing of the newborn infant (this is the only place in Scripture where the term is used in this context); חַחְלָל is "to swathe" or "swaddle."

וְאַדְחָסָה: This refers to the procedures that were usually performed immediately after the birth of a child, even on the Sabbath (שְׁבַת קְבָטָה), because they were considered essential to the infant's survival.

It was in Egypt that Israel was to experience its birth as a nation. But even as its birth as an Abrahamite family took place under precarious circumstances (Verse 3), so, too, it appeared that the moment of its emergence as a nation might also be the hour of its death. None of the conditions necessary for its survival were present. Cast out into the open field like the carcass of some dead animal, it had ample cause to despair of its future (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 6,3). But at that very moment Israel's Rescuer appeared.

וְאָמֵר לֹךְ: And Israel arose and lived because He had spoken to it: "Arise and live!" He alone is the One Who lives forever, Who not only blesses the earth with the kiss of rejuvenation but also causes nations to die and to be reborn, smites them but also heals them, Who leads nations down into their

בְּדָמֵיךְ תִּחַי וְאֹמֵר לְךָ בְּדָמֵיךְ תִּחַי:  
I said to you: Live again in your blood! It was I that said to you: Live again in your blood!

7. I caused you to thrive like the growth of the field; you increased and grew and came to own the finest ornaments; (your) breasts developed and your hair grew long—but you were naked and bare.

8. And I passed by you and saw you and, behold, your time was the time of love—and I spread My wings over you and covered your nakedness. I made a vow to

וְרַבָּה קָצֵמָה הַשְׁנָה נִתְחַדֵּךְ  
וַתִּרְבֹּא נִתְגַּדְלֵי וַתִּפְתַּח אֲפֻרְעָרִים  
שְׁבָרִים נִכְנוּ שְׁעָרֶךְ צְמַח וְאַתְּ עָלָם  
עֲרוּיה:

וְאַעֲלֶךְ עַלְיךָ וְאַרְאֶךָ וְהַגָּנָה  
עַפְתָּךְ עַת דָּרִים וְאַפְרַשׁ כְּנָפָי  
עַלְיךָ וְאַכְפָּה עַרְוָתֶךָ וְאַשְׁכַּבְתָּךְ

graves but also raises them from the dead. It was He Who chose that seemingly stillborn nation and reawakened it to life eternal to be His witness among the nations (see *Collected Writings*, Volume I, p. 5). It was precisely because this people, about to expire in its own blood (בָּוט: "to trample"), had long abandoned all hope of surviving by its own strength, and His word alone had revived them, that God could expect that it would arise to its new life as His own people. He could expect that this people would henceforth dedicate to Him its physical and sensual nature (as symbolized by the blood of the *milah*) as well as its family and social life (as symbolized by the blood of the *Pessach* offering) and attain eternal life by subordinating itself gladly and unconditionally to the will of God. שֶׁרֶא הַקְבִּיה לוֹמֵר שְׁנִי פָעִים בְּדָמֶךְ זֶה וְרַבִּי אלְיעֹזֵר כִּי; see *Targum*.

*Verse 7.* The first miraculous evidence of Israel's God-ordained survival was that Israel, seemingly about to expire in its own blood, remained alive. Despite all of Egypt's attempts to destroy it (*Exodus* 1,12: וְאֶשְׁר יִעַט אֹתוֹ כִּי יִרְבֶּה וְנִרְאֶה) and even though it had to do without all the physical care needed to promote its bodily development from the hour of its birth (*Verse 4*), it actually matured to become a lovely, blossoming maiden, as the analogy would have it. However, Israel was still "naked and bare," (*Mechilta*) עַרְוָתֶךָ. Not until the Shechina of God had manifested itself a second time at Sinai did Israel attain genuine life. see *Hirsch Commentary*, *Deuteronomy* 32,2; (כִּי נִכְּנָה רַבָּה; they attained substance.

*Verse 8.* No more beautiful analogy could be found to describe the moment at which God chose the people of Israel as His "Bride." The "Bride" was to

you and entered into a covenant with you—so says my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—and you became Mine.

9. And I washed you in water, rinsed away your blood from you and anointed you with oil.

10. And I clothed you in embroidered garments, gave you shoes of *tachash* skin, swathed you in fine linen and covered you with silk.

11. And I adorned you with ornaments, I put bracelets on your hands, and a chain on your neck.

12. And I put a ring on your nose, earrings on your ears and a crown of splendor on your head.

13. And you adorned yourself with gold and silver, your garment of fine linen, silk and embroidery;

וְאַכּוֹא בְּכִרְיוֹת אֶתְךָ נָאֵם אֲרֻנָּי  
יְהוָה וְתִהְיֶלְיָה:

9. וְאַרְחַצְךָ בְּפִים וְאַשְׁטַף דְּמֹעֵד  
מַעַלְיךָ וְאַסְכַּר בְּשָׁמְנוֹ:

10. וְאַלְבִּישָׂךָ רְקָמָה (וְאַנְעַלְךָ)  
תְּחַשׁ וְאַחֲבֵשָׂךָ בְּשָׁשׁ וְאַכְסָף  
מִשֵּׁי:

11. וְאַעֲנַךָּ עָרֵי וְאַתְּנֵה צְמִירִים  
עַל־נִירְיךָ וְרַכְבֵּר עַל־גְּרוֹנוֹה:

12. וְאַתְּנַגְּסֵם עַל־אַפְקָן וְעַנְילִים עַל־  
אַגְּנִיךָ וְעַטְרָתָה תְּפָאָרָת בְּרָאָשָׁךָ:  
13. וְתַעֲרֵרִי וְתַבְּכֵסֶף וְמַלְבִּיזֶךָ  
שְׁשִׁי וְמַשִּׁי וְרְקָמָה סְלָת וְרַבְשָׁ

תְּרוּרִי:

have all her needs supplied by the hand of God, and both God and Israel were bound to one another for all time by the mutual pledge (לי לעם). It was as if two lovers who had waited for one another with passionate longing had come together at long last. Hence, too, the powerful impact of the words נָאֵם אֲרֻנָּי interpolated at this point, identifying the One Who entered into this bond of true love with Israel. **תְּרוּרִי:** The moment so long awaited by God had come at long last. Only now—or never—could God hope to keep the promise He had once given to our forefathers as their blessed destiny: הנְּיעָ שְׁבּוּעָה שָׁנְשַׁבָּע הַקְבִּיה לְאָבוֹתֶם וְכָר (פרק ד' א' לילוד).

**Verses 9–13.** God adorns the one He loved, and she, for her part, beautifies herself for Him (Verse 13). We need only read the suggestions of our Sage (Yalkut; see also Targum), in order to sense the magic of those historic days. God wipes from His beloved one every last remnant of Egyptian depravity (זְרַע), and at the same time He uses the blood of the *milah* and the blood of the Pessach offering to free her from weakness. He anoints her head with the oil of consecration (*שמן המשחה*); He wraps her in the mantle of His Sanctuary (וְהַמְעָשָׂה מִשְׁקָן שָׁהָה מְרוּקָם: ר' קמָתָה) which will henceforth shelter

you ate fine flour, the sweetness of fruit and oil, and thus you became exceedingly beautiful, and strode with vigor toward the royal position.

ושׁקְמָן אֲכַלְתִּי וַתִּפְאֵר בְּמִזְרָחַ מָאֵד  
וַתֵּצֶלְתִּי לְמִלּוֹכָה:

14. And your name went forth among the nations because of your beauty, for it was made perfect through My splendor which

וַיֵּצֶא לְךָ שֵׁם כְּפָרוֹת בִּיפְנֵיךְ כִּי | 14

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her and whose שְׁמָן would be protecting her; He clothes her in the priestly garments of moral purity (בְּשָׂרֶשׁ, אלו בְּגָדֵי כְּהוֹנָה) and gently lowers upon her head that precious veil, the cloud of His blessed nearness (אַלְוֹ עֲנֵי הַכְּבוֹד). She is adorned with splendid ornaments: on her wrists, the bracelets of the Tablets of the Law (אַלְוֹ שְׁנֵי לְוחֵת הַבְּרִית); around her neck, the golden "chain" of His Torah, which she does not resent as a burdensome "chain;" and if there is anything else that can add to her beauty, it is the precious ring of the Ark in His Sanctuary, toward which she looks at all times. Her ear listens to the golden words of the Torah which will never depart from her hearing and which will cling to her like rings of fine gold. And on her head she proudly bears the magnificent diadem of the שְׁכִינָה with which her royal bridegroom has crowned her.

The "Bride" is completely attuned to the wishes of her Beloved. Her heart filled with blessed, sacred rejoicing, she adorns herself in accordance with the will of her Beloved. She is ready to give herself completely to Him; her only desire is to please Him. For the people of Israel only adorned themselves when, of their own free will, they donated their gold and silver and their hand-woven fabrics for the Sanctuary. Whatever they lifted up to God as a consecrated homage offering was to serve as their own spiritual sustenance. And it was from His generous hand that the people of Israel henceforth received their food, their sweet fruit and their oil (V.19—... הַאֲכָלָתָךְ לְךָ תְּחַי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְךָ). No other nation on earth could match Israel's beauty. In the full vigor of youth, surmounting every obstacle, (תַּלְתָּ, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 24,21) the "Bride" strode forward to the queenly position God had promised her as her rightful place among the nations (cf. Psalm 45, written as a wedding hymn to a king and his queen; see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

Verse 14. Alien nations came under the spell of her beauty. Perhaps they understood that her outer beauty (that is the meaning of שְׁנֵי; see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 39,5) had been brought to perfection solely by the

I had placed upon you, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**15.** But you put your trust in your beauty and played the harlot because of your name; you poured your harlotries upon everyone who passed by to whom [your name] might be attributed.

**16.** You took of your garments and made for yourself high places covered with patches and played

כליל הוא בבררי אשר-شمתי  
עליך נאם ארכני יהוה:

ו. ותבטחתי בימךותוניעל-شمך-  
ותשפכ כי את-תונאותך על-כל-  
עובר לדייה:

ו. ותקני מבעירך ותעש-ישראל

ornaments God had bestowed upon her. It was God's glory that gave her beauty the character of (Psalms 50,2).

*Verse 15.* Unfortunately, the faithfulness of this "Bride" to her Beloved was shortlived. All too soon she forgot to Whom it was that she owed her יופי. **תבטחתי ביפך:** She put her trust in her outer beauty without considering that all her power and glory had been bestowed upon her by God Himself only as a bridal gift on the day of her betrothal to Him. She came to see her יופי as her ultimate aim. **כי חחת יופי.** "beauty took the place of all else" (Isaiah 3,24). She no longer believed that it was God Who had bestowed upon her the "name" she enjoyed among the nations, and so she used her "name" as the place from where she searched with passionate longing for the suitor into whose arms she wanted to fling herself in gratitude for having given her a "name." "I will go after my true friends, the ones that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink" (Hosea 2,7). **ישך** probably refers to שׁם.

*Verse 16.* It was to this newly found "lover" that the people chosen by God constructed **בסטות** and had the effrontery to clothe these sites of worship in the "garments" given to it by God Himself (Verse 10). And so the people broke their faith with God upon "altars covered with patches." This puts into sharp focus the blasphemy inherent in every half-measure that only serves to drag the sacred and Divine down to the sphere of caprice and constantly changing modes of life by the mere act of raising other altars side by side with the altar of the Sanctuary of the Law. They had the audacity to use patches from the sacred garments in a feeble attempt to cover up their infidelity. But this only served to make Israel's infidelity to its God appear all the more wretched and unworthy. **לא בראות:** Such infamy had never been known in the past (this

the harlot upon them—the like of which had never been before and shall never be again.

17. Then you took the vessels of your glory, from My gold and silver that I had given you, and you fashioned for yourself forms of a male figure and played the harlot with them.

18. You took your embroidered garments and covered them with them; you presented My oil and My incense before them.

19. And My bread which I had given you, the fine flour, the oil and the sweetness of fruit which I gave you to eat—these you gave to

בְּמֻמּוֹת טָלָאות וַתִּזְנֵן עַלְיהֶם לֹא  
בָּאוֹת וְלֹא יָהּוּ:

יו. וַתִּקְחֵי כָלֵי תְּפִרְנָתֶךָ כְּזָבָבִי  
וּמְכָסֶפֶי אֲשֶׁר נִתְחַתֵּי לְךָ וְתַעֲשֵׂי  
לְךָ אֶלְפָטוֹ זָבָב וְתִזְנִירֵיכֶם:

יא. וַתִּקְחֵי אֲתִידְבָּנָי רַקְמַתָּךְ  
וּתְכָסִים וּשְׁמָנוֹ וּקְטָרָתָי נִתְחַתֵּי  
לְפָנֶיכֶם:

יב. וְלֹחָמָיו אֲשֶׁר־נִתְחַתֵּי לְךָ סָלָת  
וּשְׁמָנוֹ וּרְבָשָׁ הַאֲכָלָתִיךְ וּנְתַתְּיוּ

תִּרְאֵי.

probably refers to בְּמֻמּוֹת, a play on words: לא בָּאוֹת-בְּמֻמּוֹת (see our commentary on Chapter 20, Verse 29), ולא יָהּוּ and a better future shall not see its like again.

*Verse 17–19.* At last the unfaithful “Bride” discovered the “lover” to whom she thought she owed all her beauty. Had she not acquired her beauty solely from the gold and the silver she had learned to extract from the mysterious sources of almighty nature? Did not nature alone hold the treasures that rational people accept as the true values of life? Under the spell of such illusions, God’s people henceforth exerted every effort to secure the favor of these supposed powers of nature for all time. And the people of God dropped to their knees before the גָּלִילִים, the forces of nature that they now regarded as the almighty deities of their life on earth. They took the gold and the silver with which God had once adorned them (כָּלִי מְשָׁרוֹק) and used it as a symbol of their own madness. As long as the people of Israel had regarded their gold and their silver as gifts from the hand of God, it lent them pride and greatness, but now it had become an idol before which the people of God bowed down in abject servility. To this idol the people of God surrendered all their precious “garments.” “Sacred garments” (Verse 10) with which God in His grace had once offered to clothe His people were now abused as mantles to cloak a crude materialism, thus distorting the Divine message conveyed by these garments (see *Collected Writings*, Vol. III, p. 169 ff.).

Smoke rose from their altars in tribute to their בְּגָלִילִים; it was the which now received votive offerings, tokens of blind obedience, while the altar of

פָּנִים לְרִיחַ נִיחַם וַיְהִי נָאָם  
דָּרְנֵי יְהוָה:  
them as an expression of  
compliance—thus it [really]  
was—is the pronouncement of  
my Lord, God, Who reveals His  
loving kindness in justice.

**20.** And then you took your sons  
and your daughters whom you had  
borne unto Me, and these you sac-  
rificed to them to be devoured—is  
that the least of your harlotries?

וְתִקְחֵי אֶת־בָּנָיךְ וְאֶת־  
גַּתְינָךְ אֲשֶׁר יָלַת לְיַי וְתוֹבָחִים  
הַם לְאַכְלֵל הַמַּעַט מִתְנוֹתָהָךְ:  
תיזנוטך קרי.

God stood deserted. The people chosen by God had forgotten that "it was God, Who have given them the grain, the wine and the oil, Who have increase their silver and also their gold, which they turned over to Baal" (Hosea 2,10  
רַיְהָיָה: That is how low they had sunk.

**Verse 20.** It was inevitable that the apostasy should assume even more extreme dimensions. Once sinister forces of nature are permitted to rule over life, the Baal deities readily assume the hideous features of the abominable Moloch. Where God once had elevated life to the shining heights of sacred service to Him alone, the tyranny of a blind, unfathomable fate now reign supreme. It is to this concept of blind fate (this is the interpretation of Moloch see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 18,21) that these desperate people now turn for some modicum of happiness; they seek to appease the jealous deity by sacrificing to it their most precious possessions. The Moloch will accept even children. Children, the precious pledges of God's love (*אשר ילדת לי*), intended by God as the pure seed of a future that should accord with His will, were offered to the Moloch by the trembling hands of their parents who wanted to curry favor with the Moloch.

**חַזְוֹנָה חַמְסָה מִתְנוֹתָה:** Was this the least of the terrible losses with which the people of Israel had to pay for its infidelity to God? Do not all other sacrifices (plural קְרִי) fade into insignificance when measured against this one inconceivable Moloch act (singular חַזְוֹנָה—כְּחִיבָּה—חַזְוֹנָה)?

**Verse 21.** This is the procedure *לְטַלֵּחַ*, the handing over of the child to the priests of the Moloch. *הַפְּבָרָה* is the passing of the child through fire. According to the way the *רַבָּבִים* describes it, the father receives the child back from the hands of the priests, and then he, the father, himself passes his own child through the fire. Just how the procedure of this "passing through" was done is not quite clear. In any case, it is not an act of ordinary "burning" and so is quite different from what is usually taken to be "the ritual of Moloch." (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.) These children, by

21. You slaughtered My children by giving them to be led through [the fire] for them.

22. And with all your abominations and harlotries you did not remember the days of your youth when you were naked and bare and trampled down (about to expire) in your own blood.

23. And then it came to pass, after all your wickedness—woe, woe unto you! is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—

24. That you built for yourself an elevation and prepared for yourself a platform in every open place.

וְתַשְׁחַטִּי אֶת־בָּנֵי וּתְהַנִּים  
בְּהַעֲבֵר אוֹתָם לְהַמָּ:

וְאַתָּה כָּל־תַּעֲבֹתָךְ וְתַגְתִּיךְ  
לَا זָכַרְתִּי אֶת־צְמַחַ נְעוּמֵיךְ  
בְּהִיוֹתְךָ עָלָם וְעַרְיוֹת מִתְבּוּסָתָ  
בְּרַפְקָד הַיּוֹתָה:

וְיֵהִי אֶתְכֶם כָּל־רְעַתָּךְ אֹוי אֹוי  
לְךָ נָאָם אֶלְכֶנֶן וְהַוָּה:

וְתַבְגִּילֵךְ גָּבָב וְתַעֲשֵׂי לְךָ רְקָמָה  
בְּכָל־רְחוֹבָה:

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virtue of this act, cease to be the children of God, so that they could indeed be considered as having been literally sacrificed to the Moloch (see also Jeremiah 7,31: לְשָׁרוֹן אָה בְּיַהְמָם חָמָס and our commentary, ibid.)

*Verse 22.* And yet one single thoughtful look back to their early days should have been sufficient to make God's people realize the extent of their corruption. Had they remembered this, they would never have lost their senses to the madness of Baal and Moloch worship. Was it to the נְגָלִים that God's own "Bride" owed her splendid rebirth when she lay on the ground, naked, exposed and moribund? The people had forgotten their beginnings, and so God was compelled "to withhold their grain and wine" and to "strip [them] naked as [they had been] on the day of [their] birth" (Hosea 2,5). Perhaps these afflictions would bring the people back to Him.

*Verse 23.* Once things had come to this point, nothing could stop the faithless nation. The Prophet speaks of the shameless acts of immorality committed by them in their desire to imitate alien cults and to ally themselves with their mighty neighbors. In so doing, the people chosen by God had given up even the last trace of modesty and self-respect. Alas that God's people could have forgotten themselves so completely!

*Verses 24–25.* The nation chosen by God is likened to a harlot waiting in every open space and at every street corner to offer herself to anyone passing

**25.** At every street corner you built your platform and turned your beauty into an abomination and you spread your legs for every one that passed by and you increased your harlotries more and more.

**26.** And so you played the harlot with the sons of Mitzrayim, your neighbors, great of flesh, and you increased your harlotries more and more in order to enrage Me.

**27.** Behold, then I stretched out My hand over you and diminished your portion and abandoned you to the whim of those that hate you, the daughters of the Philistines, who were ashamed of your ways of lewdness.

**28.** Then you turned in harlotry toward the sons of Ashur because

25. אל-כל-ראש נרד בנית המתר ותתעבי אתי'וףך ותפשקי את-רגליך לכל-עוֹבֵר ותרכבי את-תונתך:

26. ותוננו אל-בנוי-מארים שכניך גדרלי בשר ותרכבי את-תונתך להכעינני:

27. והנה נטוטי ירי עלייך ואנערך חקוק ואתנתק בנטש שנאותיך בנות פלשתים הנקלמות טורבקה: זמה:

28. ותוננו אל-בנוי אשור מבלתי הונוחיך קרי.

by (חפשי את רגליך). Charms thus displayed succeed only to repulse anyone who still possesses even a spark of decency. נב is "to support one's back"; ספ is "to spread apart" (סִפְתָּה in Aramaic is "to separate").

*Verse 26.* Egypt's embrace seems to satisfy the animal passions of the people God had once chosen as His "Bride." The angrier this would make the old God, the better. After all, time had passed Him by. בשר as in the context of Leviticus 15,2.

*Verse 27.* But then the people suddenly found themselves forced to tighten their belts. (קח, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 47,22). However, they had sunk so low that it did not occur to them that these "coincidences" were warnings by means of which the God they had spurned sought to assert His rights. Moreover, the Egyptian "lover" was unable (or was he merely unwilling?) to keep the daughters of the Philistines from giving tangible expression to their feeling of moral indignation at the shameless conduct of their Jewish "sister" nation (for the interpretation of מה see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 18,17). But all this did not change the situation. The only result was that Judah, realizing that her Egyptian "protector" was simply not "protective" enough, began to look for other friends.

*Verse 28.* For a while, she had a new "protector" in Assyria. (זה אל)

you were insatiable; you played the harlot with them and still you were not satisfied.

29. Then you increased your harlotries toward the land of Canaan—toward Chaldea, but with this, too, you were not satisfied.

30. How blighted was your wretched heart—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who

שְׁבָעֵתֶךָ וַתִּנְיַם וְגַם לֹא שְׁבָעַת:

29. וַתִּרְקַּבְתִּי אֶת־תִּתְנוֹתֶךָ אֶל־אָרֶץ  
כְּנָעָן כְּשָׂדִים וְגַם־כַּאֲתָה לֹא  
שְׁבָעַת:

30. מֵה֙ אָמֵלָה לְבַתְּךָ נָאֵם אָרְצִי

in Numbers 25,1). Her desire was insatiable. Her passion continued unabated even after she had realized that Assyria's so-called "love" had nearly cost her life. (The Northern Kingdom was lost and not much more was needed for the Southern Kingdom to come to grief also).

Verse 29. Judah reeled from one excess to another. If we study the parallel account in Chapter 23, Verses 14–17, we may understand the phrase אל אָרֶץ כְּשָׂדִים: Following the downfall of Assyria, the Babylonian influence made itself felt in Judah. The "Chaldean figures" that Judah beheld in her midst filled her heart with passionate desire. So this time Judah did not have to go far afield. Her harlotry extended over the "land of Canaan." The "warlike figures" of Babylonia tempted her right there on the sacred soil that had been given to her by God. Of course, this could happen only because the land had ceased to be אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל and has assumed, instead, the characteristics of the former אָרֶץ כְּנָעָן with all its depravity (Leviticus 18,3: כְּפֻשָּׂה אָרֶץ כְּנָעָן אֲשֶׁר אָנִי מְבָרֵךְ אֶתְכֶם שְׁמַה לֹא תִּשְׁחַט) that had once been swept away by the Jewish spirit of purity and morality. (A similar description—כְּנָעָן instead of יִשְׂרָאֵל—is found also in Hosea 12,8 and Zephaniah 1,11). The Babylonian spirit with which אָרֶץ כְּנָעָן was already tainted made Judah sink still lower and encouraged her to extend her harlotry even further, to Chaldea. וְשָׁלַח מֶלֶאכִים אֶלְيָתָם כְּשָׂדִים "She sent messengers to Chaldea" and [the sons of Babylonia] came "to share her couch of love" (Chapter 23,16–17). וְהַנְּדָבָה לֹא שְׁבָעַת: Who can tell how much further Judah might yet have gone if this lover had not rewarded her pursuit of him by inflicting on her the gruesome fate she deserved.

That is how הָנָה views the depraved female who had once pledged Him her eternal fidelity in bridal affection.

Verses 30–34. Judah could no longer realize the extent of her depravity, how utterly wretched (אָמֵלָה as in אָמֵלָה, Psalms 6,3) her heart (לְבָבָה) had become, and that she had lost the last traces of self-respect and character. Such was the one who had imagined that her wanton wiles would enable her to lure

envelops His loving kindness in justice—when you did all these things, the acts of a lewd woman who imagines herself to be a ruler!

**31.** In that you built your elevation at every street corner and erected your platform in every open place and were not like a harlot that despises her whore's wages.

**32.** The adulterous wife—she receives strangers [even] under her husband.

**33.** To all harlots gifts are given, but you have given all your gifts to all your (pretended) lovers, and you attempted to bribe them with your harlotries, to come to you from every side.

**34.** It was with you the contrary of what is the case with [other]

יְהוָה בֶּצֶשׁוֹתךְ אַתְּ־קָל־אֶלְהָ  
מִשְׁעָה אֲשֶׁר־זָוַנה שְׁלֵטָה:

וְ בְּנֹתְתָךְ גַּבְּרֵל בָּרָאשׁ כָּל־דָּרְךְ  
וּרְמַתְפֵּעַ עֲשֵׂיתִי בְּכָל־רְחוֹב וְלָא־  
הִיעַתִּי בְּזָוַנה לְקָלָם אַתְּנָנוּ:

הָאֲשֶׁר הַמְנַאָּפֶת תַּחַת אִישָּׁה  
תַּקְהֵחַ אֲתִיזָּרִים:

לְכָל־זָוָות וּמְנִינָּרָה וְאֶת־  
נְתַחַת אֲתִינְגָּרִין לְכָל־מְאַהֲנִין  
וּתְשֻׁחְרֵי אַוְתָּסְלְבָוָא אַלְיךָ מְסֻכִּיב  
בְּתִזְנוּתָךְ:

וְיְהִירְכָּךְ בְּפָךְ מְוִיהָנָשִׁים  
וְתָרֵר:

the heart of every male into her trap. She should have been ashamed to stand before her peers who, at least, kept up appearances and still set some store by character and pride. After all, a woman does not blatantly sell herself in public, for all the world to see (*כְּרוֹאשׁ כִּיל וְגַר*); it would be bad for "business." A shrewd woman begins by ridiculing (*קלט*) the wages offered her so that she can cleverly and gradually raise her price. Initially, she should act aloof. As a "respectable married woman" (Verse 32), she should react with detachment and indifference to the attentions of other men. She should not rush things to the point where she is immediately offered *pnah*, an outright harlot's wage. At the most, she might indicate that perhaps she would be ready to accept the kind of gift that a respectable gentleman might offer to a respectable lady (*ונָה*, from *ונָה*, related to *ונָה*: the Talmudic term *נוֹגִינָה*, "dowry," would support the assumption that *ונָה* should be interpreted in this sense). By maintaining a deliberately reserved stance, the woman can take on the airs of a *shaltos* (Verse 30) over her admirers.

But Judah did not even possess the character and pride required for that purpose. She virtually threw to those who seemed to be her lovers (*טָאַבְגָּץ*) the presents she already had in her possession (*ונָנִיךְ*) and so, from the very

women; you solicited harlotries but none sought harlotry with you; you gave whore's wages but no whore's wages were given to you. Thus you were the opposite [of all others].

35. Therefore, harlot, listen to the word of ה:

36. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because your 'brass kettle' has been poured out long ago, your nakedness long uncovered; because of your harlotries with your lovers and all the idolatries of your abominations; and according to the blood of your children that you gave to them;

37. Therefore, behold, I will gather all your pretended lovers to whom you have made yourself pleasant, all those whom you have loved, along with all those whom

בתונותיך ואחריך לא זונה  
ובתתך אתנון ואתנן לא נטונך  
ותחי להפה:

לֹכַן זוֹנָה שְׁמַעַי הַבְּרִיאוֹתָה: פ

כִּיהֵא כָּד אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה יְעַן  
הַשְׁפֵּד נְחַשְׁתֵּר וְתִגְלֵה עַרְוָתֶךָ  
בְּתֻנוֹתְךָ עַל־סָאָהָרִיךְ וְעַל־כָּל־  
בָּלוּל תְּשֻׁכּוֹתְךָ וְכָרְכִּי בְּנִידָךְ  
אֲשֶׁר נָתַתْ לְךָם:

לֹכַן הַגְּנוּ מְקַבֵּץ אַתְּכָלָל  
סָאָהָרִיךְ אֲשֶׁר עַרְבָּתָ עַלְיָהָם  
וְאַתְּכָלָאֲשֶׁר אַהֲבָתָ עַל־כָּל־

beginning, these presents assumed the character of bribes (*שָׂחַר*): they were the bait of common harlotry (*חוֹנוֹתָךְ*), intended to attract those that had no desire whatsoever for such a creature (*אַזְרִיךְ לֹא זוֹנָה*). This behavior, which was not customary even among such women (*הַקָּה*), had earned Judah the punishment she deserved. She had not hesitated to give away as *מִנְחָה* the most precious gifts she possessed, presents that had been given her by God as a *נְדוּיָה* (*נְדוּיָךְ*) on her wedding day, but in return she got only crude rebuffs. (Verse 31): infinitive plural as in Chapter 6, Verse 8.

*Verse 35.* Incredibly, ה was willing to address Himself to such a *זונה*; one can hope for the rehabilitation of even a *זונה*. His purpose is to win His people back.

*Verses 36–37.* *הַשְׁקָה נְחַשְׁתֵּר*: This turn of phrase is difficult to interpret. The *נְחַשְׁתֵּר* (*סָרְפִּים*) interpret *נְחַשְׁתֵּר* in the sense of the "lower part" of a woman's body (*עֲרוֹת אֲשָׁה*, see Rashi). Malbim's interpretation, which associates *נְחַשְׁתֵּר* with *שָׁן* and so arrives at the connotation of "snake venom" or "magic," seems untenable.

you have hated; I will gather them around you and I will uncover your nakedness in their presence, so that they may see all your nakedness.

**38.** And I will judge you according to the judgment pertaining to adulteresses and to those that

אֲשֶׁר שְׂנָאת וּקְבַצָּתִי אֶתְכֶם עַלְיכֶם  
מִפְּכִיב וּגְלִיתִי עֹרוּתֶךָ אֶלְהֶם  
וְרָאו אֶת־כָּל־עָרָונְתֶךָ:

38. וְשִׁפְטָתֵיךְ מִשְׁפְּטִי נָפֹות

We would suggest the following interpretation: God placed Judah on trial for adultery and murder (Verse 38). But in fact, nothing happens to Judah that she has not already brought upon herself. If God now uncovers her "nakedness" before the eyes of her lovers (Verse 37) and strips her of her power and wealth, leaving His people, once again, "naked as on the day of their birth" (Hosea 2,5), this has happened only because she, the adulteress, revealed her "nakedness" long ago for all the world to see and stripped herself of the "garments" that God had placed upon her. God simply divests her of the "garments" to which she herself had forfeited her rights long ago. The loss of her material possessions completes the picture of her pitiful nakedness: וְרָאו אֶת־כָּל־עָרוּתֶךָ—וְרָא חֲלֹוֹתֶךָ (Hosea 2,12). But God sits in judgment over Judah as a murdereress (שָׁפְטָתֵיךְ), for has she not sacrificed her own children (דְּמֵי בָנֶיךָ אָשָׁד נָתַת לְהֵם) to her obsession (see also Verses 20–21)? Instead of guiding them in the proper paths, has she herself not led them to their ruin? This would explain why the "brazen kettle," is to be understood in the same connotation as חַרְבָּה in Chapter 24, Verse 11. There, the "brazen kettle" is used as a metaphor describing the state inside of which the blood of its own murdered children has been spilled (ibid., 7), and which now, emptied of all its contents and charred by fire, is robbed of all its offspring. The same interpretation applies to the present verse: Judah has murdered her children with her own hands (שָׁפְטָתֵיךְ רַם as in השָׁפְטָתֵיךְ), emptied herself of her own contents, and therefore God now sits in judgment over her because she has committed murder.

אֲשֶׁר עָרַבְתָּ עֲלֵיהֶם: Were it not for the unusual combination with עָלֵיכֶם, the most straightforward interpretation would be to refer to those for whose loyalty you would have been willing to vouch at any time, on whose loyalty you would have placed unconditional reliance. The meaning of זָהָא כָּל וְזָהָא may also be: all those whom you loved for behavior that should have made you hate them. In your eyes the very acts that should have caused you to hate them made them seem lovable to you.

**Verse 38. זָהָא:** My anger and the assertion of My rights, which you have so shamefully disregarded, now demand your blood.

have shed blood, and I will give you away as the blood of anger and of rightful demand.

**39.** I will deliver you into their hands and they will tear down your elevations, and your platforms will be demolished: they will strip you of your clothes, take the vessels of your splendor and leave you naked and bare.

**40.** They will bring up an assembly against you and they will stone you and they will slit you open with their swords.

**41.** They will burn down your houses in fire and they will execute judgments upon you before the eyes of many women; thus will I cause you to cease playing the harlot and you will no longer pay whore's wages.

**42.** As for Me, I will appease My fury [even] as it is turned against

ושפכתי נס ונתתייך גם חקקה  
וכנאה:

<sup>39</sup> ונתתייך אותך בירם והרשו  
גביך ונתציו רמתיך והפסיתו  
אותך בגדיריך ולקחו בצל תפארתך  
והגיחוך עירם ועריה:

**40.** והעללו עליך קהלה ורגמו אותך  
באבן ובתוך בחרבותם:

**41.** ושרפו בתייך באש ועשור  
בד שפטים לעיני נשים רבות  
והשבתייך מזונה ונמס אתך לא  
תתגונעוו:

**42.** ונחמתי חמתיך בך וסירה

*Verses 39–41.* Those whom you regarded as your friends are inflicting upon you the punishments meted out for adultery and murder. They are proceeding entirely in accordance with the laws of the Torah: סנהדרין א' טו, see סנהדרין טו. Even the "assembly" required, according to Leviticus 20,2, is present, willing and ready to assist in the execution of the sentence. In view of the moral indignation that rightly fills the souls of all the women against Judah, the adulteress and murderer, it is readily understandable that they consider a harsher punishment (*פִּירָאַדְתָּה* in *ושׁוֹרֵשׁ בְּחַקְוֹנָה*) entirely appropriate. Judah has certainly gone too far. The many women who were in attendance at the execution (Verse 41) leave the execution site "deeply shaken" (.הַנְּדָרָן טה). A similar description is found in Chapter 23, Verses 46–49; *בַּחַק* is related to *ברַחַק*, "fissure" or "rent," i.e., "to slit open;" this corresponds to *ברַא*, Chapter 23, Verse 47 (*וְאֶתְתָּחַקְתָּ*).

*Verse 42.* *הַשְׁבַּחַק* מזונה ונר: After all that has been said before, this strikes a note of bitter irony.

*Verse 42.* But even as His just wrath strikes Judah, God looks to the day when His claim to His people, which He had stated for so long without receiving

you—My rightful demand is to vanish from you; I wish to return to [My] rest and be angry no more.

**43.** Because you did not remember the days of your youth and provoked Me with all these things, I will bring also this your conduct upon your head, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice—even though you did not create the lewdness that led to all your abominations.

קָנָתִי מֵמֶךָ וְשַׁקְפָּתִי וְלֹא אֲכַעַם  
עוֹר:

43. וְעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא־זָכַרְתִּי אֶת־יְמִינִי  
נְשֻׁוּרִיךְ וְתַחֲנוּנִילִי בְּכָל־אֱלֹהִים  
אָנָּי הָא דְּרָבָה | בְּרָאשׁ נְתַתִּי נָאָם  
אָרְגַּנְיָהוָה וְלֹא עֲשִׂיתִי אֶת־יְהוָה  
עַל כָּל־תְּחִטְבָּתֶךָ:

תיר...:

satisfaction, will be satisfied, enabling Him to return to the "rest"——וְשַׁקְפָּתִי—for which He yearns. *ברנו רחם חוכר זו היא והנחות* (Habakkuk 3,2). see our commentary on Chapter 5, Verse 13.

*Verse 43.* Because Judah has erased all the memories of her youth from her consciousness, God, too, is not mindful of the early days of His people when He considers the punishment that should be inflicted upon them. The fact that the cradle of God's chosen people had stood in the midst of Canaanite depravity, that their father had been an Emorite and their mother a Hittite (Verse 3) could have weighed in Judah's favor. In a world that deified the baser passions it certainly was difficult to elevate men to godliness by placing the stamp of saintliness upon their physical senses. *לא עשִׂית אֶת הָמָתָה וְגַרְ-זָמָתָה*: "As *זָמָת* indicates having one's mind on something, *זָמָת* would denote the same concept as sensuality, where the idea of the 'senses' is limited to the baser senses and means addiction to the excitement of the baser senses" (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 18,17). This *זָמָת*, this addiction to the baser passions marked the environment into which the Jewish people was born, into a world filled with such a view and way of life. —*ולֹא פָשַׂת אֶת הָמָתָה* (see Hosea 6,9). But the guilt of God's people lay in the fact that, having failed to liberate itself from these ways, it had eventually committed all the *חַוְבוֹת* for which it now stood trial. And God has placed the full burden of responsibility for these sins directly upon His people.

*הָרְגוּנִילִי*: the *kal* form is used here instead of the *hiph'il* inflection that might have been expected in this context. This implies the thought that with every sin that men commit in order to arouse God's wrath, they cause harm primarily to themselves (see Chapter 8,17 and Jeremiah 7,19 *אַוְתָם* מַכְעִיסִים—*הָלֹא אַוְתָם* אַוְתָם); *אַלְכָה* as in Genesis 47,23.

**44.** Behold, whoever desires to pronounce a proverb about you may put it thus: as the mother, so her daughter.

**45.** You are the daughter of your mother who (also) cast aside her husband and her children, and you are the sister of your sisters who cast aside their husbands and their children—your mother, the Hittite; your father, the Emorite.

**46.** And your bigger sister is Shomron, she and her daughters, who dwells to your left, and your sister that is smaller than you, who dwells to your right, is Sodom and her daughters.

44. הנה בְּלִהְטָשֵׁל עַלְיךָ יָמָשֶׁל  
לְאָמֵר בָּאֲפָה בְּתָה:

45. בְּתִ-אֲפָה אַתָּה גָּנְעַלְתָּה אִישָׂה  
וּבְנִיתָה וְאֶחָותָ אֲחוֹתָךְ אַתָּה אֲשֶׁר  
בְּעַלְלָא נְשִׁיתָן וּבְנִיתָן אֲפָכָן חֲתִיתָ  
וּאֲבִיכָן אֲמֹרִי:

46. וְאֶחָותָךְ הַגְּרוֹלָה שְׁטוֹרָן דֵּיא  
וּבְנִיתָה הַיּוֹשְׁבָת עַל-שְׁמָאוֹלָךְ  
וְאֶחָותָךְ הַקְּטַנָּה מִפְּךְ הַיּוֹשְׁבָת  
קַוְמִינָךְ סָרָם וּבְנִיתָתָה:

*Verse 44.* God is not willing to ease the burden of guilt that weighs heavily upon His people. As He recalls their early days, He finds one particular *סֶל* to portray the full extent of the nation's depravity: "As the mother, so her daughter."

*Verses 45–46.* אֲפָקָן חֲתִית וְאֲבִיכָן אֲמֹרִי (as mentioned in Verse 3) has become tragic reality: the Jewish nation had become a daughter worthy of its Canaanite mother. It also had sisters of like mind. To the left (i.e., to the north; see Chapter 4, Verse 4) there is a "bigger" sister nation, Samaria. To the right (i.e., to the south), there is a "smaller" sister, Sodom. There are the daughter cities of these foreign capitals. For an explanation of *הַקְּטַנָּה* see Verse 56.

They all share the same basic attitude toward marriage: they do not believe in marital fidelity. It also does not occur to them that parents have duties toward their children. They have "cast off their husbands and their children." That the people of the Canaanite and Sodomite states flaunted such attitudes should not surprise us. What should fill us with dismay is that Samaria and Jerusalem also denied Him Who sought to be their "Husband." In unnatural callousness, they, too, taught their children to despise their true Father and, by leading their offspring into depravity, they became the murderers of their own children. Thus Hosea (2,4), speaking in the name of God, summons the children, his people, to fight against their own mother, the corrupt nation: רִיבוּ בְּאַתְּךָ רִיבוּ כִּי הָא לֹא אֲשֶׁר "Fight, do battle with your mother, for she is no longer My wife."

47. And yet you did not walk in their ways, nor did you imitate their abominations; you were almost—it makes one sick [to say it]—more corrupt than they in all your ways.

48. As surely as I live—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—your sister Sodom, she and her daughters, did not do what you and your daughters have done.

49. Behold, this was the burden of the guilt of your sister Sodom: arrogance resulting from a surfeit of bread, confidence strengthened by tranquillity filled her and her daughters; and the hand of the poor and the needy she did not strengthen.

50. Then they became haughty

47. וְלֹא בָּרַכְיָהוּ הַלְּקָט  
וְקִתְעֻבּוֹתֵיכֶן עֲשִׂיוֹתִיכֶן כִּמְעַט קָטָט  
וּמְשַׁחְתֵּי מִנּוּ בְּכָל־דָּרְכֶיךָ:

48. חִוְּאָנוּ נָאָם אֲרַנְיָה וְלוֹהָ אָם  
עֲשָׂתָה סָלָם אֲחוֹתָךְ הִיא וּבְנֹתָרָה  
כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂת אַתְּ וּבְנֹתָרָה:

49. הַגְּדוּלָה הָיָה עַזְןָ סָלָם אֲחוֹתָךְ  
אֲוֹן שְׁבָעַת־לְחָם וּשְׁלֹנֶת הַשְּׁקָט  
בְּנָה לְהָלְבָנָתָה וּנְרַעַנְיָה וְאַבְיוֹן  
לֹא הַחְזִיקָה:

50. וְתַגְבְּהִינָה וְתַפְשִׁיןָ תְּעוּבָה  
יְתוּרָה:

*Verse 47. Worse, in the eyes of God Judah is even more depraved than her sisters.*

The meaning of **טז** is not clear. (According to some commentators, it is an abbreviation of **קטי**.) It may be derived from **קוט**, to "feel disgust" (Chapters 6,9; 20,43; 36,31); **טז**, infinitive form.

*Verses 48–50. Sodom was destroyed because of her social crimes. Her agricultural wealth (וְיָרָא גָּנוּ כִּי כֶּלֶה מִשְׁקָה וְנוּ כְּנָה הַ) coupled with a long period of peace and prosperity, made the people of Sodom so complacent and arrogant that they not only disregarded their social duties but also refused to accept the authority of God. As a result, the Sodomites gave free rein to their crude physical appetites. Where there is moral depravity has eradicated the fear of God, there can be no limits to social injustice. The men of Sodom were true **רַעִים מִסְתָּרִים** (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 13,13). ראיה ראייה: see Genesis 18,21.*

But even though Sodom's depravity had exceeded all bounds (Genesis 13,13), it pales into insignificance when compared to the enormity of Judah's sin. For the people of Sodom had not stood at the foot of Mount Sinai as

and committed abominations before Me, and I removed them as soon as I had seen it.

**51.** And also Shomron—she did not commit even half of your sins; you increased your abominations so that they surpassed theirs; you have justified your sisters by all the abominations you have committed.

52. Therefore you, too, bear your disgrace, you who have passed judgment on your sister: because of your sins, which you have committed, more abominable than theirs, they have been justified by you. Be ashamed also and bear your disgrace, for you have justified your sisters!

53. But I will return (some day)  
to seek out their exiles, the cap-

## לפנֵי נָאכִיר אַתָּה כַּאֲשֶׁר רָאִיתִי סֵם

ו. ושמרון בחייב חטאיך לא  
חטאך ותרכז את-תשבותיך  
מהנהו תזרקו את-אחותך בכל-  
תשבותיך אשר עשית

52. גמ"א: שאי בלא פתר א"ש  
פלילת לאחוותך בחתאתיך אשר-  
התעבת מכך תצנוקה טמא ו gamb-  
אות בושי ושאי בלא פתר בצדקה  
אהיות:

**וְשָׁבְתִי אֶת־שְׁכִיתָהוּ אֶת-**<sup>53</sup>

did the people of Judah, nor had God's wondrous power and His personal providence been so patently revealed in Sodom's history as it had been in the history of Judah.

**Verse 51.** True, Samaria had broken all her ties with God, but her open defection from God and His Law was at least untainted by the disgusting hypocrisy shown by the people of Judah who had the effrontery to make a travesty of God's truth right there on the sacred site of Zion זְדֹבֶת נִקְדָּחָה. Samaria seems almost innocent in comparison. Jeremiah spoke in a similar vein (see Chapter 3, Verses 11 and our commentary *ibid.*). But Ezekiel goes even further: the קַרְבָּן וְנַחֲזֵק (kerav v'nechazek) already hints at the shattering impact of the verse that follows.

**Verse 52.** Judah herself has passed sentence on Samaria. In view of Judah's conduct, Samaria's actions appear almost justifiable. But let Judah hide her head in shame and humiliation. For in the light of Judah's *tzeton*, which became true abominations (as in תְּחִימַת צָלָל, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 53,2) not only her sister Samaria (צָלָל) but also Sodom; i.e., both her sisters (צָלָל) may now lift up their heads again.

*Verses 53–55. If Judah, therefore, still has any future, if, despite her*

tivity of Sodom and her daughters, the captivity of Shomron and her daughters, and the captivity of your exiles—in their midst.

54. In order that you may bear your disgrace and feel ashamed of all that you have done, in that you will be a comfort to *them*.

55. As for your sisters, Sodom and her daughters will return some day to their former life, and Shomron and her daughters will return some day to their former life—and you and your daughters also will return some day to your former life.

שְׁבִיתָ סָלָם וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ וְאַתְּ־שְׁבִיתָ  
שְׁמֻרֹן וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ וְשְׁבִיתָ שְׁבִיתֵךְ  
בְּתוּכָהָךְ:

44. לְמַעַן תִּשְׂאִי כְּלָמָתךְ וּגְלָמָת  
מִכֶּל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂית בְּנַחַט אַתְּ:

55. וְאַחֲתָתֶךְ סָלָם וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ תְּשִׁבָּן  
לְקָרְפָּתֶךְ וְשְׁמֻרֹן וּבְנוֹתֶיהָ תְּשִׁבָּן  
לְקָרְפָּתֶךְ וְאַתְּ וּבְנוֹתֵיךְ תְּשִׁבָּן  
לְקָרְפָּתֶךְ:

שבות קרי. שבות קרי.

shocking crimes, Judah may still put her trust in God's promise that she will be permitted to return to her homeland once she has been purified by the sufferings of *galuth*, then Sodom and Samaria, too, may be sure of God's mercy. Let them look upon Judah and hear the Divine promise of Judah's rebirth, and from that draw hope for their own future. But let Judah hide her head in shame at the thought that Sodom need only look upon her in order to be comforted, secure in the knowledge that she, too, can entrust her fate to God.

Since the people of Sodom have been destroyed, the "return of Sodom to her former state" (*חַשְׁבֵן לְקָרְפָּתָן*) may be given one of the two interpretations that follow: either (1) as Rashi would have it, the former sites of pagan worship will be freed from God's curse (נִסְחָר וּמְלֹח וּגְרָ) Deuteronomy 29,22) and once again burst into full bloom, or (2) Sodom is merely a metaphor alluding to the Divine judgments visited upon all the corrupt pagan states in history. Even these nations may hope that someday God, in His great mercy, may turn His love toward them once more and grant them a new future.

It is with profound emotion that we read the words of the Prophet which declare so eloquently that all men are the children of God. And note that these words, uttered by a Jewish prophet, are recorded in the pages of the "Old Testament."

For the interpretation of שְׁבָות קָרֵי, see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 30,3; for the interpretation of שְׁבָות קָרֵי וּמְלֹח וּגְרָ, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 39,1.

**56.** Your sister Sodom did not serve you in your mouth as a [warning] report on the day of your boundless pride;

**57.** Before your wickedness was uncovered, as at the time you were struck by the shame of Aram's daughters and of all that are round about her, (as well as that) of the daughters of the Philistines who threaten to attack you from every side.

**58.** So you must bear your lewdness and your abominations, is the pronouncement of God.

59. For thus has my Lord  
spoken, God, Who reveals His lov-

לשמעה בפייך ביום גאנזיך:

**57.** בטרם תגלה רשות כמו עת  
חרפת בנות-ארום וכל-סביבותיה  
בננות שלשטים הsharpות או ור  
מספריב:

58. את־זָמְתָךְ וְאֶת־תַּעֲבֹתָיךְ  
את נשאותים נאם יהוה: ס

59. כי כה אמר אָרְנוֹן יְהוָה תִשְׁעַת

תשי"ה כר'

*Verses 56-57.* Many warnings were ignored. If only Judah in her boundless arrogance (**רָאוּנִים**, note the plural form) had thought of her "sister" Sodom (this explains Ezekiel's reference to the "little sister" in Verse 46) and recalled the Divine pronouncement (Deuteronomy 29,22: **גַּפְרֵית וּמְלֹחֶם כְּתָבָת סֻדּוֹן**....**תַּנְהֵן**). The fate of Sodom would then have served as a serious admonition to Judah. Surely, Judah would have had ample occasion for such reflections. Her inability to resist the criminal assaults of Aram and the pillages of the Philistines (II Chronicles 28—see Rashi) should have opened her eyes to the catastrophe toward which she was headed. Judah need not have waited until God Himself "uncovered her wickedness" (see Verse 37). **תָּמְשָׁה**, obviously derived from **תַּשְׁ**; the interpolated silent consonant **ת** seems to imply the supposedly 'legal' character of the atrocities committed against Israel by its enemies, atrocities which the nations considered entirely "normal" but which placed the people of God into constant peril. (See Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, פ. ב.) **רָאֵשׁ**—"roam about"; **מָשֵׁךְ**—"disdain."

**Verse 58.** However, as things are, Judah must face the consequences of her depravity. She has erased all the memories of her youth from her life, and so God has no reason to ease the burden of her responsibility for **תְּנִשֵּׁת** and **תְּמִלָּה** (see our commentary on Verse 43). **וְאַתָּה:** Yet despite the terrible punishments with which God afflicted His faithless nation, God's eternal love for His people never ceases.

**Verse 59.** It seems that this was God's manner of abrogating the covenant He had once made with His people; God had repaid them measure for measure.

ing kindness in His execution of justice: I shall do to you as you yourself have done, you who have despised the oath, to break the covenant.

**60.** Nevertheless, I shall be mindful of My covenant which I made with you in the days of your youth; I have established for you an everlasting covenant.

**61.** And if someday you will remember your ways and you will blush, when you will take your sisters that are bigger than you, along with those that are smaller than you, and I will give them to you as daughters but not because of *your* covenant.

**62.** Thus I have upheld My covenant with you, and you will know that I am הָנֶה.

**63.** So that you may remember and be ashamed, and this disgrace

אתוך באשר עשית אשר-כנית  
אללה להפר ברית:

60. וְכֹרְתִּי אֲנִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי אֶתְךָ  
בַּיּוֹם נָעֲמָךְ וּבְקִימָתוֹ לְךָ בְּרִית  
עוֹלָם:

61. וְכֹרְתִּי אֶת-דָּרְכֵיכֶם וּגְלָמָתֶךָ  
בְּקַחְתֶּךָ אֶת-אֶחָתָיכֶם הַגְּלֻלָת  
סְפָךְ אֶל-הַקְּטָנוֹת מִפְּנֵךְ וּנְתַתִּי  
אֶתְכֶם לְךָ לְבָנֹות וְלֹא מִבְּרִיתְךָ:

62. וּבְקִימָתוֹ אֲנִי אֶת-בְּרִיתִי  
אֶתְךָ וְינָעַת כִּי-אַנְיִי הוּא:

63. לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרִי וּבְשָׁתְּ לֹא

(כתיב) ועשית, (קרי) ועשיתי: the nation brought all its sufferings upon itself by its actions (43); see Verse 43. אֲשֶׁר בֵּית וָגֶר: The people of Israel would never have dared to destroy the Divine covenant if it had not disregarded the warnings of Divine retribution (הַקְּרִית, Allotot ha-Krith, Deuteronomy 29.20) for any violations of Israel's obligations under the terms of the covenant.

*Verse 60.* And yet God never ceased even for a moment to work for the fulfillment of the promise He had made in His covenant with Israel. Notwithstanding the nation's breach of faith with the covenant, God will not forget the love His people showed Him in the days of old (Jeremiah 2,2). God has "betrothed Israel to Himself forever" (Hosea 2,21). God will preserve His covenant with Israel forever.

*Verses 61–63.* In days to come Israel will witness the fulfillment of God's promise. The Prophet's message offers Israel a vista of unparalleled splendor. And even we today, with the Prophet's bitter denunciations of the "depraved woman" still ringing in our ears, struggle with disbelief as the vision of a wondrous future unfolds before our eyes. But can there be any room for doubt

will keep you from opening your mouth again, since I offer you atonement for all that you have done; that is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 17.** 1. The word of God came to me:

יְהוָה צְדֹקָה עֹזֶר פִתְחוֹן פֵה מִפְנֵי  
כַלְמַתָּר בְכְפָרִילָךְ לְכָל־אֲשֶׁר  
עֲשִׂית נָאָם אֶלְגַי יְהוָה: ס

ז וְיְהִי רְבָרִיתָנוּ אֱלֹי לְאַקְרָב:

if the vision before us was drawn by the pen of God's own truth? A day will dawn when nations great and small—Samaria and Sodom were not the only "sisters" of the Jewish nation to regard Canaan as their mother—will rally around Israel. Israel will then be their spiritual mother and will lead them to their true Father. And whenever the people of Israel will recall their own rebellion against God in consort with their "sisters," they will hide their faces in shame—ונכלמת—for having deliberately torn up the Divine covenant. For they will know that this wondrous turn of events was certainly not a consequence of their own loyalty to the covenant. And then Israel will look up in fervent gratitude to her true "Husband" Who had never forgotten His covenant and the promise He had made to His people והקיתתי אמי אה ברוחי אמי אה. And then God's chosen people, their faces blushing in abject shame, will accept the unearned gifts of future bliss from His generous right hand—ירעת כי אני ה'. Their lips will fall silent, for words will not be capable of conveying the nation's gratitude at a time when the memory of its shameful past will evoke pangs of boundless remorse. Then Israel, in silent tribute, will gratefully acknowledge the wondrous goodness in which God has spread the "cover" (נִסְרָה) of forgiveness over its sad past and which has provided His people with the strength to prepare for a new and glorious future.

**Chapter 17.** The Prophet takes up the struggle against the ideas that "ruled" the sacred soil. He uses משלים of his own to counteract the משלים (Chapter 12, Verse 22) which had been used to unite the members of the Jewish people in the homeland and those in the *golah* into an ill-fated alliance (Chapter 2, Verse 2). Indeed, all of Ezekiel's life in the midst of the *golah*, with the symbolic acts he is bidden to perform, is nothing but one continuous משל. All of Chapter 16, which immediately follows the משל in Chapter 15, is also indeed one great משל. It is in this spirit that we must also understand the chapters that follow.

2. Son of mankind, set a riddle  
and tell a parable to the house of  
Israel.

3. And say: Thus has my Lord  
spoken. God, Who reveals His  
loving kindness in justice: A great  
eagle with great wings, long pinions,  
full plumage and many-  
colored splendor, has come to  
Lebanon and taken the crown of  
the cedar.

4. He cut off its best sucking  
twigs and brought them to the

בָּנֵי־אֲרֹם חֹדֶחֶת חַיְּרָה וְמִשְׁלָל  
מִשְׁלָל אַלְבִּית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

וְאָמְרָתָ בְּהָאָמֵר אָרְנוּ יְהוָה  
גָּנֶשֶׁר הַגְּדוֹלָה גְּרוֹל הַכְּנָפִים אֲרֹךְ  
הַאֲבָרָם פָּלָא הַגּוֹצָה אַשְׁדִּילוֹ  
הַרְקָמָתָה בָּא אַלְהַלְבָנוֹן וַיַּקְחָ אַתָּה  
צְפָרָת הָאָרוֹן:

אַתָּה רָאשׁ וַיְנִיקּוּתִי קְפָרָה

*Verse 2.* חַיְּרָה—**טַשֵּׁל**: It seems to be a **חַיְּרָה**, riddle, and yet it is only a **טַשֵּׁל**, a parable. Its meaning would be obvious to all, were it not for the unscrupulous demagogues who, seeking to poison the minds of the **בֵּית מִרְיָה** (Verse 12), had known how to turn it into an inscrutable, incomprehensible riddle. Thus, the Prophet might have wondered indeed whether his message which, in essence, was simply a **טַשֵּׁל**, would be readily understood (Verse 12). Let us read the present chapter in the context of Verses 12–15; however, its meaning should be clear to us even without these verses.

*Verses 3–4.* אַכְרָב כְּנָפִים (Deuteronomy 32,11); נִצְחָה (Leviticus 1,16); רַקְמָה literally, colorful embroidery; צְפָרָה: This word occurs only in the Book of Ezekiel in the meaning of “treetop.” It is related to סָטוּר, “to tower,” “to shoot up.” (See Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, p. 492).

This allegory depicts events that were already past history at the time of the Prophet. The mighty eagle of Babylonia (Jeremiah 48,40) had swooped down on Mount Lebanon and its magnificent “cedar,” taking away the cedar’s splendid top and cutting off its strength by severing some of its best “sucking shoots” (*ינִיקָה*), so that, in the end, the bird of prey could carry off the twigs to its own nest in Babylonia (see also V.22). **רָאשִׁים בְּשָׁמִים** as in **רָאשִׁים** (Song of Songs 4,14). That was the end of the kingdom of Jeconiah, the end of the once-proud cedar-reinforced fortress of Lebanon (Jeremiah 22) in which the Jewish kings had put their trust. That was the end of the tree whose shade had once covered mountains and whose “sucking shoots” had extended to the river—*Psalm 80,11–12*.

**אֶל אָרְץ כְּנָעֵן**: Babylonia is described here as **אֶל אָרְץ כְּנָעֵן**. This is a bitter irony. The Jewish monarchs had long regarded Babylonia as their second home, and those eager to integrate into the new environment had long urged

וַיִּבְיאֵהוּ אֶל־אָרֶץ כְּנָעֵן בָּעִיר  
רְכָלִים שָׁמָוֹן:

5. Then he took from the seed of the land and placed it in a fertile field; he had taken it to abundant waters, [but] he allowed it to become [no more than] a mountain willow.

6. It grew and became an overhanging vine of low stature, whose tendrils were meant to turn [inward] into itself and its roots were

וַיָּקַח טְרוּעַ הָאָרֶץ וַתִּתְהַנֵּה  
בְּשָׂרֵרִים זָרָעָם קָח עַל־מִים רְבִים

צְפָאָפָה שָׁמָוֹן:

וַיִּצְמַח וַיַּהֲיוֹ לְגַפֵּן סְרִיחַת שְׁפָלָת  
קוֹפָה לְפָנוֹת דְּלִיוֹתָיו אֶלְיוֹן

the introduction of Babylonian ideas into (ארץ כנען) (Chapter 16, Verse 29). So they now find their **ארץ כנען** in Babylonian captivity. The expression **עיר רכלים**, "the city of traders" who arranged for the export and import of various products from one country to another (ובכל) as in Chapters 27 and 28; see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,16), refers to the commerce carried on in the Babylonian metropolis. At the same time, it portrays in a metaphorical sense as a land of merchants (וגפני) (also denotes "merchants" or "trader;" see Zechariah 14,21).

**Verses 5–6.** A sad little plant, grown from "royal seed" (Verse 13), was to eke out a bare existence on its own native soil. The kingdom of Zedekiah was to be a shadow kingdom surviving by the grace of Nebuchadnezzar. However, the soil in which the Babylonian ruler had planted the seed (**חָרֶב**, as in Hosea 11,3) was moist, very fertile and capable of bringing forth lush vegetation. In **צְפָאָפָה**, is interpreted as follows: It was intended that the water willow should turn into a parched willow of the mountain. If the Babylonians had had their way, the plant would have remained a dried-out willow. But thanks to the splendid quality of the soil, the seed, contrary to all expectations, grew into a sturdy vine. The conqueror tried to suppress its growth. Its branches were not permitted to spread but were to be forced to hang over the edge (**טְרוּעַ**, Exodus 26,12); it should not grow straight upward but turn inward; **דְּלִיוֹתָיו**, derived from **דָּלָה**, "to draw forth," i.e. "sucking tendrils". Instead of spreading out, its tendrils are to cling to its trunk; its roots, too, are to remain obediently within their assigned borders. However, the vine refused to remain a **סְרִיחַת**; but **גַּם**, it grew up to become a healthy grapevine with strong branches, defying every attempt to stunt their growth, breaking their shackles (**אָמָן**, "free;" see Genesis 16, 12 **אָמָן**) and

meant to remain beneath it; however, it became a vine, producing branches and freely sending forth its splendid sprigs.

7. Now there was a great eagle, with great wings and full plumage—and, behold, this vine thirstily stretched its roots toward him to water it from the watering beds of its planting.

8. For it had been planted in a fertile field and near abundant waters to produce branches, bear fruit and become a mighty vine.

9. Say: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His lov-

ושׁרְשֵׁיו פָּחַתִּיו יְהֹוָה וְתַהֲנֵלֶנֶן  
וְתַעֲשֵׂ בְּדִים וְתַשְׁלַח פְּרָאוֹת:

7. וְיָתַי גָּשְׁרָאָחָר בָּרוֹל גְּרוֹל  
כְּנָפִים וּרְכִינּוֹצָה וְתַגְּנֵה הַבְּנָפָן  
הַזָּאת קְפֻנָּה שָׁרְשֵׁיהָ עַלְיָה  
וּרְלִיוּתָיו שְׁלַחָה-לָלו לְהַשְׁקוֹת  
אָוֹתָה מַעֲרְבּוֹת מִטְעָה:

8. אַל-שְׁרָה טֹוב אַל-מִים רְכִים  
הַוָּא שְׁתִילָה לְעַשְׂוֹת עַנְפָּה וְלְשַׁאֲת  
פְּרִי לְהִיוֹת לְגַפֵּן אַפְּרָתָם:

9. אָמַר כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים בָּרוּךְ

developing into a lush plant (פָּרָה)—instead of كְּחִיבְּרָאֹות (קְרִיָּה)—magnificent branches; also Chapter 31,6).

*Verses 7–8.* Eager to retain its full freedom to expand, the vine turned for help to another great eagle which, though not as mighty as the eagle of Babylonia (see Verse 3), seemed strong enough to liberate the vine from its pitiful condition. That the vine should be planted on moist, fertile soil and yet condemned to languish as a dried-out mountain willow (Verse 5) or, at best, as a stunted little vine (Verse 6)—this was more than Zedekiah could bear. It is this last king of Israel who is the object of these verses and their symbolic imagery. His memories of the days when the Jewish kingdom stood proudly erect like a cedar (Verse 3) stirred him to a desperate act of rebellion. His plan was indeed that Egypt should come to the rescue of the “vine,” irrigating it with the rich water supply surrounding Judah’s plant so that, with Egypt’s help, the withered plant could at last become a strong grapevine again (Verse 8).

כַּן. “to starve.” (see Job 30,3); שְׁרוֹגָה is “soil around a vine, worked and prepared for the express purpose of improving the vine’s water supply” (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 42,2). לְעַשְׂוֹת עַנְפָּה לְשַׁאֲת טָרִי: In contrast to Verse 23 (גַּשְׁאָה עַנְפָּה וְשַׁהָּ טָרִי) the “activity” (פְּשָׁה) of the tree, normally centered on the production of fruit, is noted in terms of the leaves it produces. If the “tree” is to produce fruit, it is in need of efforts other than those to which Zedekiah resorted (see Verse 23).

*Verses 9–10.* The absence of the interrogative (“questioning”) particle ה

ing kindness in justice: Will it prosper? Will he not cut its roots and (with little effort) knock off its fruit so that it will wither? All the sustenance of its growth will dry up (at the same time), and it will not require a strong arm or many people to deprive it of its roots.

10. And even if it were [firmly] planted, would it therefore prosper? Truly, as soon as the east wind only touches it, it will surely wither; in the watering beds of its growth will it wither.

11. Then the word of God came to me:

12. Do say to the house of disobedience: Do you not know what all this means? Say: The king of Babylon has come to Yerushalayim and has carried off its

תצלח הלוֹא אֶת־שְׁרִשָּׁה יַנְתַּק  
וְאֶת־פְּרוּחָה | יַקְוֹס וַיְבַשׁ בָּלֵד  
טְרֵפִי צְמַחָה תִּבְשֶׂשׁ וְאֶבְרָעַץ  
גְּרוּלָה וּבְעַם־דָּרֶב לְמִשְׁאֹות אֲוֹתָה  
מִשְׁרָשָ׀יוֹ:

ו. והנה שתוֹלָה הַתִּצְלָח הַלוֹא  
כִּנְעַת בָּהּ רַוח הַקָּרִים תִּבְשֶׂשׁ  
עַל־עַרְעַת צְמַחָה תִּבְשֶׂשׁ: פ

ו. וַיֹּאמֶר רְבָרִי־יְהוָה אֱלֹי לֵאמֹר:

ז. אָמַר־נָא לְבֵית נָפְרִי בְּלֹא  
וְרַעַתָּם טְהָרָא לְהָאָלָה אָמַר הַגָּה־בָּא  
סְלָך־בָּבָל וְרוֹשָׁלָם וַיַּקְחֵת אֶת־

implies that Zedekiah was certain, beyond question or doubt, that his plans would bring the results he desired—**אָלֹת**. But did he consider whether this would also accord with the will of God? God has decided otherwise, and that is why Nebuchadnezzar will have no difficulty carrying out his intentions. He uproots the trunk of the vine with ease and plucks its fruits (Verse 8) with just as little effort. (**טָמֵךְ**, is a weaker form of **טָמַךְ**, "to chop off"). And the plant, so healthy and strong only a short time ago (note the masculine form, implying strength), will wither. **טוֹרֵחַ**: the commentators equate **טוֹרֵחַ** with **טוֹרָא**, the Aramaic for "leaf." However, Scripture uses **טוֹרֵחַ** to denote "nourishment" (it should be interpreted as such also in the case of Genesis 8,11; see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.). Accordingly, **טוֹרֵחַ** would denote the nutrients required for the growth of the vine; this interpretation would fit with **טוֹרֵחַ** in the next verse. **וַיְבַשֵּׂה**, a singular form, denotes instantaneousness, suddenness.

*Verse 12.* Only a **בֵּית מַדִּין** would need a new Word of God (Verse 11) to help find the answer to this "riddle" (Verse 2).

king and its princes captive and taken them [back] with him to Babylonia.

**13.** And he took one of royal seed and made a covenant with him; and he made him take an oath after he had captured the mighty of the land,

**14.** That it should remain a lowly kingdom and not rise up, to keep its covenant so that it might continue to exist.

**15.** But he rebelled against him, sending his messengers to Egypt to give him horses and many people. Shall he succeed? Shall one who does such things save himself? He has broken a covenant; should he [be allowed to] save himself?

**16.** As I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice, in the [dwelling] place of the king who has appointed him king, whose oath he has despised and whose covenant he has broken,

מלךה ואות-שריה ייבא אותן  
אליו בבלה:

**13.** ויקח מזרע המלוכה ויקלח  
אתו ברית ייבא אותו באלה ואת-  
אילן הארץ לך:

**14.** להיות ממלכה שפלה לבളתי  
התנסה לשמר את-בריתך  
לעمرה:

**15.** וימרדרבו לשחת מלךיו  
מצרים לתחדלו סוקים ועם-רב  
בוצלך נימולת העשה אלה והperf.  
ברית ונמלט:

**16.** חידָנָגִי נאם ארני גַּהֲה אֶס-  
לא במקומ המלך הממלך אותו  
אשר בזה את-אלתו ואשר

*Verses 13–14.* Zedekiah had taken an oath of loyalty to Nebuchadnezzar (II Chronicles 36,13, אשר החשיבו באלקים, see II Kings 24,15. אשר מאובן (Exodus 14,15).

*Verses 15–16.* זכרן Only in the "Jewish" Bible can we find the most eloquent protest against any attempt to separate political expediency from personal morality and to perpetuate the miseries of history by creating a so-called "double standard," with one set of rules for individuals and quite another for nations to follow. A state too, must consider its word, once given, as sacred. Covenants and alliances must not be broken by considerations of political expediency. Not even a state or its representative, the king, may take the name of God lightly (Verse 16). States, too, must remember that they owe

it is] with him, in the midst of Babylon, [that] he shall die.

**17.** And not with great might and a great multitude will Pharaoh assist him in battle when the ramparts will be raised and the siege tower will be erected to destroy many souls.

**18.** He despised an oath to break a covenant, and has stretched out his hand (to that place) for help; though he has done all this, he will not escape.

**19.** Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: As I live, it is My oath that he has despised, My covenant that he has broken; I will cause it to come upon his own head.

**20.** I will spread My net over

הַפְּרָא-בְּרִיתְךָ אֶתְךָ בְּחֹזֶקֶת כָּל  
יממות:

וְלֹא בְּחֹיל גָּרוֹל וּבְקָנָל רַב  
יִשְׁשָׂה אֶתְךָ פָּרָעה בְּטַלְחוֹתָה  
בְּשִׁפְךָ טַלְלָה וּבְכָנוֹתָךָ לְתִקְרִית  
גַּפְשׁוֹת רַבּוֹת:

וְכֹזֶה אֱלֹהָה לְהַפֵּר בְּרִית וּהְנָהָ  
גַּתְנוּ יְרוּ וְכָל-אֱלֹהָה עֲשָׂה לֹא יִמְלֹט:  
ס

לוֹן כִּהֵד אָמַר אַלְעֵן יְהוָה חַי  
אָנוּ אַסְלָא אֱלֹהִי אֲשֶׁר בָּרוּ  
זְבָרִיטִי אֲשֶׁר הַפְּרָא גַּמְתִּיכִי  
בְּרָא שָׁׁוֹ:

וְפָרְשָׁתִי עַלְיוֹ רְשָׁתִי וּגְנָתְפָשִׁ

allegiance to God. This is a truth to which Zedekiah's own tragic fate will attest for all time to come.

*Verse 17.* At the crucial moment the help promised by Pharaoh fails to materialize. אֶתְךָ, "with it," see Chapter 2, Verse 1 and Chapter 16, Verse 59.

*Verses 18–19.* The king, no matter how deluded, would never have turned to Egypt for help (וְנִנְצַח ד') as in Lamentations 5:6: מִצְרָיִם נִנְחָה י' (see also Jeremiah 50, 15) or broken his oath of loyalty and treaty of alliance with the Babylonian overlord if he had not first broken the covenant God had made with the Children of Israel at Sinai (רְבָה רְבָה ר'), the only covenant that could have given the state strength and a guarantee of survival. The king and his nation were forced to accept the yoke of Babylonia because they had broken the pledge made at Sinai. As Jeremiah had put it, "But Zedekiah did not humble himself before the Prophet Jeremiah, before the mouth of God" (II Chronicles 36,12). By breaking the pledge he had made to the king of Babylonia, Zedekiah had broken the covenant of Sinai for a second time.

*Verses 20–21.* Not Nebuchadnezzar but God Himself had spread the net

him and he will be caught in My snare; and I will bring him to Babylon and I will deal sternly with him there for his faithlessness which he committed against Me;

21. And (also) with all his fugitives from all the wings of his army; they will fall by the sword, and those that remain will be spread to all the winds, and you will know that it is I, ה' Who has spoken.

22. Thus has my Lord spoken, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I (also) have taken from the tall crown of the

במצורתי ובכיוותיו בבל  
ונשפטתי אותו שם מעלו אשר  
מעל-בָּבִי:

ואת כל-מברתו בכל-אנפיו  
בחרב יפלז ונשאים לכל-רוות  
יפרשו וירעטם כי אני יהוה  
ברוחים

כה אמר אלי יהוה ולקחתי  
אני מצפתה הארץ הרמה  
טרכחו קרי.

over Zedekiah so that he eventually met a miserable end in Babylonian captivity. He had committed טעילה against God. And as with him so, too, God will deal with his retreating armies. The particle ואות (Verse 21), which at first glance seems redundant, probably refers to (see Chapter 12,13–15) מברתו מבחווי, the elite (as in Chapter 23, Verse 7). are מברחו upon whom he looked as צרו, his support. They have been reduced to fugitives (as implied by the missing "to flee"). For אגפי, see our notes on Chapter 12,14: he expected them to provide him with "winged" strength in his struggle with the mighty eagle (Verse 3), but they have failed miserably. The term אוורה למם וו (see Chapter 12, Verse 14) is mitigated here to read ליל רוח יטרשו: their dispersion among the nations is, at the same time, a "dissemination" of God's truth throughout the world (see Zechariah 2,10 יכבודה יהוה ז').

Verse 22. But the word of God turns this sad של into a glorious vision of hope for the future of the Jewish people. Neither breaches of faith nor the support of mighty nations will replant the cedar that is the Jewish kingdom, nor does the plant need an abundance of water in order to grow. Only God can replant it and cause it to flower anew. When the Babylonian eagle took away the top of the cedar (Verse 3) and cut off its choice "sucking shoots" (Verse 4), God took part of the treetop for Himself.

וַיֹּאמֶר הָאֵיךְ וַיֹּתְנוּ בְּשָׂדֶה זוֹת (V.5) While the Babylonians maintained a pitifully small Jewish entity on the otherwise fertile soil of the Jewish homeland, God took His part of the tree which He had saved to place it on

cedar and have set it; from its finest sucking twigs will I cut off a tender one, and I will plant it on a high and towering mountain.

23. On the mountain of the height of Israel will I plant it, and it will bear branches and ripen fruit and become a mighty cedar; birds of every wing will dwell beneath it, in the shade of its branches shall they dwell.

24. And all the trees of the field will know that I, הִנֵּה, have hum-

ונתתני מראש יגנוקתיו רך אקטוף  
ושתלתי אני על הרץ לה ותלוי:

23. בָּהָר מְרוּם וִשְׁرָאֵל אֲשֶׁתְּלַבֵּשׂ  
וּנְשָׂא עֲנָפָה וְעַשֶּׂר פְּרִי וְהַיָּה לְאָרוֹן  
אֱקָרֵיר וְשָׁכַנְנוּ תְּחִתְיּוּכֶל צָפֹר בְּלָ–  
כֶּנֶף בְּצֶל גְּלִילֹתָיו תְּשִׁבְנָה:

24. וְוַרְשָׁוּ כְּלִיעָצֵי הַשְּׁרָה כִּי  
אַנְּנִי וְהִנֵּה הַשְּׁפָלָתִי עַז נְבָה

the only soil where in God's judgment it could blossom again. In exile, far away from its native soil, the uprooted dynasty of Jeconiah would produce new sprouts under the care of God's Providence (see our commentary on Jeremiah, Chapter 22). And then it would grow up "like a sucking shoot before Him, like a root from arid soil; it had neither stature nor beauty" (Isaiah 53:2). What fools are they who still believe that the plant of God requires "well-watered" soil in order to survive and grow. God has chosen a towering, arid mountaintop (*חַלְלָה*) on which to plant the tender shoot that sprouted from His treetop. Though the mountaintop might look to the world like an unsightly side of rocks, it would grow along with the tender shoot planted upon it, and once the mountain had become *הר גָּבָה וְחַלָּל*, the humble shoot, too, would have become a sturdy tree.

*Verse 23.* Under the care of God the mighty cedar rises upon the summit of Israel's "high place" and all the birds will build their nests in its widespread branches. (This allegory is explained in greater detail in Chapter 31, Verse 6: וּבְכָלָו יָשַׁבוּ כֹּל גְּדוּלָה צִיר). The Jewish kingdom of the future will be rooted in the lofty place that is Zion (*כְּמַרְסָה צִיר* Jeremiah 31,11). The nations of the world will seek shelter in the shade of its spiritual strength (Hosea 14,8: יָשֻׁבוּ כָּל כָּנָף שְׁמָם—שְׁמָם, for they all thirst for the waters that flow from Zion's heights. לְלִשְׁבֵי בְּצֶלָו), for they all thirst for the waters that flow from Zion's heights. לְלִשְׁבֵי בְּצֶלָו (אַחֲלָן קְלַטָּס: טְהוֹר) צָפֹר, of every kind, including the mighty eagles whom the cedar had once begged for protection, will draw the spirit of purity from the wellsprings of Zion. מְרוּם צִיר is the same as טְהוֹר. Once the truth that comes forth from Zion has been recognized in its full glory, Israel, too, will attain its rightful position among the nations of the world.

*Verse 24.* When this comes to pass, the "trees of the field" will recognize the true conditions necessary for their survival and growth. Even the tallest

bled the lofty tree and elevated the lowly tree; that I caused the vigorous tree to wither and helped the barren tree to blossom—I, ha, have spoken and have brought it about.

הַגְבֵּהֲתִי עֵץ שָׁפֵל הַוְּבִשְׁתִּי עֵץ  
לֹחֶם וְהַפְּרִחֲתִי עֵץ בָּשֵׂר אֲנִי וּלְהֵעָמֵד  
הַבְּרִתִּי וְשִׁשְׁתִּי פ

**Chap. 18. 1. The word of God came to me:** יְהִי וַיֹּאמֶר רַבְּרִיאַלְעָה אֱלֹהִים לְאַמְרוֹ:

tree, no matter how full of sap, will wither and fall if God has not planted it. This holds true for individuals and nations alike. The giant oak tree that was Nebuchadnezzar will crash to the ground but the trees of Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah will endure. The lofty tree of Haman will be cut down, while Mordechai, whom everyone had despised, will produce beautiful blossoms (*Yalkut*). This has come to pass over and over again in history, and history will repeat itself until the nations, at long last, will understand the ways of God. It is through God's promise, too, that Sarah's withered tree of life was rejuvenated in a manner no one would ever have thought possible.

**אָנִי ה'**: We, the descendants of Sarah, bear witness to this truth. Should we not, then, put our trust in the Word of God, and regard it as already having come to pass at the very moment when it was first uttered? **דְּבָרַתִּי וְאַשְׁתִּי**: The mighty cedar that symbolizes our hopes for the future is already rising before our very eyes.

**Chapter 18.** The Prophet had used powerful language to destroy the **טַלְעָה הַיִשְׁתָּמֵךְ** (Chapter 12, Verse 22)—that had gained credence on "the soil of Israel." His mission had been to champion the truth of the Divine **תְּהֻנָּה** against the impudence in that parable (see our notes *ibid.*). This was the theme of Chapter 12, Verse 23 through Chapter 17. When juxtaposed with Verses 25 and 28 of Chapter 12, the concluding words of Chapter 17 **אָנִי (ז) דְּבָרַתִּי וְאַשְׁתִּי** underscore the consistency that links these chapters.

Armed with the weapons of Divine truth, the Prophet now had to refute yet another **טַלְעָה** that was no less dangerous. It was a **טַלְעָה** threatening to poison the minds of men that still believed in the Divine **תְּהֻנָּה** and who were terror-stricken by the Prophet's vision of Israel's sad fate. That the Prophet has shifted his attention from the impudent and unbelieving to this particular circle of faithful men is indicated by the question **מַה לְכָת** (Verse 2) and the wording **אָתָם מְשִׁלְיָנִים** (as distinct from Chapter 12, Verse 22–23). The Prophet's message announcing

2. What is it to you that you pronounce this parable on Israel's soil: 'The fathers eat wild grapes and the children's teeth become blunt'?

3. As I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, you will not have occasion to utter this parable in Israel any more.

4. For all souls are Mine! As the soul of the father, so also the

2. מה-לְכֶם אַתָּם מְשֻׁלִים אַתָּה  
המְשֻׁל הַזֶּה עַל-אֶרְכָת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
לְאֹמֶר אֲכֹתָן יָאַכְלָו בְּסֶר וְשָׁבֵן  
הַבָּנִים תְּקַהֵנָה:

3. חִידָּשָׁנו נָאָם אַרְגֵּן יְהוָה אֱסָמָה  
יְהִי לְכֶם עֹד מְשֻׁל הַמְּשֻׁל הַזֶּה  
בִּישְׂרָאֵל:

4. הַן בְּלִיהְנְפָשׁוֹת לִי הַנֶּה בְּנֶפֶשׁ

the imminent blow of God's wrath had filled these people with dark despair. Instead of helping to correct the evils they saw around them, they had begun to believe that such efforts would be useless and that they were powerless to avert the coming disaster. For was it not clear that all of them, the innocent, would have to suffer for the sins of their fathers? Their trust in God's justice had been badly shaken. But "on Israel's soil" (see our commentary on Chapter 12, Verse 22), where the Divine promise היה אם שטוט maintained God's covenant with each new generation, thus reaffirming the nation's eternal title to the Land of God, belief in such a משל would amount to a denial of the personal care and guidance assured by God Himself to every individual.

*Verse 3.* Once you have experienced in your own lives the purifying, instructive effect of *galuth* and you will then, in retrospect, compare the vision of the future Israel with the image of the present era, you will feel ashamed that you have ever entertained such notions: ביטים הם לא יאמרו עוד אבות אכלו (Jeremiah 31,28).

*Verse 4.* Do they not see how blind one must be to believe in a משל such as this? The breath of God has endowed every human being with a personality (נפש) of his own. Every human being therefore is entitled to consider himself as a child of God and may, indeed must, view himself before God as a unique personality. A father is no closer to God than a son; therefore, to punish a son for the guilt of his father's transgressions constitutes a denial of the truth that all human beings are equally children of God and must each stand on his own merit. It is true that God proclaims: שׂרֵך עַקְבָּת עַל בָּנִים (Exodus 20,6), as explained in the Talmud כשאזרין מושה אמר צדיק אמר צדיק that "if they have inherited the criminal tendencies of their fathers, then the children, too, must suffer for the

הַאֲבָב וְכַנֶּפֶשׁ הַבָּן לִיהְגֵּה הַנֶּפֶשׁ  
The soul of the son; they are Mine! The soul that sins, it shall die.

הַלְּטָאת הָיוֹתָמָות:

ס

5. If there is a just man who practices justice and righteousness;  
וְאִישׁ כְּרִיחָנָה צָדִיק עֲשָׂה  
מִשְׁפָּט וְצָדָקָה:

transgressions of their parents" (סנהדרין כו:). However, when the children do not bear this taint, the Torah specifies לא יוטחו על בנים ובנים לא יוטחו על אבותם על אבותם נחטאו יוטחו (Deuteronomy 24,16). This basic principle, which is binding on all human courts of justice without exception is, of course, applicable also to God's own righteous sentence.

We see, therefore, that Ezekiel is not teaching us anything new. As a true נביא, he merely seeks to give us a proper understanding of the Word of God. By so doing, he proves himself to be a Divinely-appointed interpreter of the eternal Word of God's Torah. He addresses those who had deprived themselves of the comfort of God's truth because they misinterpreted the statement טוקן אבות. He destroys once and for all a notion that had never been the Word of God and therefore could also never have been a belief held by Moses. Ezekiel is simply giving us the sole, true straightforward interpretation of the Word of God (see סנהדרין כט). With this explanation of the words נפשׁ הַחֲטָאת הָיוֹתָמָה the Prophet fights the pernicious implications of that נשל, namely, the denial that every man is responsible for his own actions and that God Himself has guaranteed to every human being an opportunity to start upon a new life by sincere repentance. The fact that there were people who distorted or misinterpreted these truths put the Prophet's whole life work into jeopardy because their attitude undermined the very foundations of the Torah.

הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחֲטָאת: as soon as and as long as a soul sins, it forfeits its right to life (see Chapter 3, Verse 18 and our commentary).

The Prophet now develops this concept further.

Verses 5–9. הַנֶּפֶשׁ הַחֲטָאת הָיוֹתָמָה: the צדיק, the righteous man, is entitled to life.

צדקה are not to be interpreted in the narrow meaning of a sense of social responsibility and social order. צדקה is the term used to describe a human social structure which accords in every respect with the Will of God and at the same time with the true nature and purpose of man. Interpreted in this sense, the adjective "righteous" describes a way of life in which every aspect of personal, family and communal life, private and public, reflects the precepts ordained by God. Hence a צדיק, a "righteous man," is not one who merely practices social justice, but one who also faithfully performs all Divinely-ordained duties. As a consequence, Ezekiel's characterization of the

6. He has not eaten facing the mountains and he has not lifted up his eyes to the idolatries of the house of Israel; he has not defiled his neighbor's wife and he has not come near to a woman during her period of separation.

א. אל-ההרים לא אכל ועיניו לא נושא אל-בגלוּ בֵּית יְשֻׁרָּן וְאֶתְּנָשָׁת רַעֲשׂוֹ לא טפָא וְאֶל-אִשָּׁה גָּנָה לא יִקְרַב:

righteous individual encompasses all the varied aspects of life. His description of the righteous individual does not merely list the observances that are not related to social justice and that we class as *חוקים*. On the contrary, these *חוקים* are accorded first place not only in the specific enumerations (Verses 6–8) but also in the overall recapitulation (Verse 9). Thus *הַרְיִם לא אָכַל וְנוּחָל אִשָּׁה* comes first, and only thereafter *נוֹהָה לא יִקְרַב*; similarly, in Verse 9 *טָמֵן טָמֵן נַחֲתִי יְהָלָךְ* comes before *טָמֵן וְצָרָה* (see *Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, p. 77–80). For see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 18,19.

These verses assert yet another truth that is already well known to us; namely, that every act of personal immorality helps dig the grave of social justice. By disregarding the *חוקים* we also undermine the very foundations of the *טָמֵנים*.

*Verse 6.* *אל הַרְיִים לא אָכַל:* To take one's nourishment while striving toward, or looking toward, the mountains. This phrase may refer to a view of life based on the pagan idealization of the physical aspects of nature, i.e., they do not eat in order to serve God but as an act of idol worship (see *Collected Writings*, ibid.). This explanation would accord with the intent of *ובְּחָדָם בְּנֵנִים* (*Isaiah 65,3*) and *הַמְּקֹרְשִׁים וְהַטְּהָרִים אל הַגְּנוּנָה* (*Isaiah 66,17*), passages that refer to the deification of the physical aspects of life which results from the idolatrous worship of nature. *לֹא אָכַלוּ פֶּל הָרָם* in *Leviticus 19,26* prohibits this "sensual" attitude toward the pleasures of the body (see also *Ezekiel 33,25*).

Probably in light of the fact that merely abstaining from gross moral transgressions does not yet make one a *צדיק*, the Sages have taught us (*בְּהָרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים*) to view the serious moral transgressions listed in this verse in a broader sense: *אל הַרְיִם לא אָכַל בְּדוֹת אָבוֹת* he does not live on the merits of his forefathers (*הָרִיט* as in *Michah 6,1*); he does not cite the good deeds of his forefathers in support of his own claim to life. He has acquired that right by his own merits. One who cites the concept of *בְּדוֹת אָבוֹת* as an excuse for his own lack of action is guilty of reprehensible *בְּבָדָה וְהָהָה*!

*ועיניו לא משא ונור שלא בקומה וקומה:* He beholds God's Presence in every phase of his own life, *אליך תשאוי את פנוי הרשבי בשפטם* (*Psalms 123,1*). He does not strut about arrogantly, for he feels God's scrutinizing eye upon him wherever he goes, making him humble and unassuming. *אל אשׁת רַעֲשׂוֹ ונור שלא*

7. He has not wronged anyone; he has returned his pledge for a debt; he has not committed robbery; he gives his bread to the hungry and covers the naked with a garment;

8. He has not lent at interest nor accepted increase; he has restrained his hand from injustice and he practices justice and truth between man and man;

9. He walks in My statutes and observes My ordinances in order to practice truth—such [a person] is a righteous man; he shall surely live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**וְאִישׁ לֹא יוֹנֵה חֲבַלְתּוֹ חֻכָּבֶשׁ בְּגַזְלָה לֹא בָּגָל לְחַמּוֹ לְרַעַב יְפָנֵן וְעַדְם יְכַסֵּה בְּגַגְנָר:**

וְאִישׁ לֹא יְמַנֵּח לְאִירְמָנוֹ וְמַרְבִּית לֹא יְקַח  
מְעַלְלָה יְשִׁיבָה וְרוֹ מְשֻׁפְטָה אַמְתָּה  
יְשַׁׁחַד בֵּין אִישׁ לְאִישׁ:

וְבְּחֻקֹּתִי וְהַלְלָה וְמְשֻׁפְטִי שְׁכָר  
לְעַשׂוֹת אַמְתָּה צְרִיק הַוְאָחָתָה יְחִיה  
נָאָם אַלְנִי יְהֹוָה:

**לֹא יוֹנֵה:** He views his neighbor's possessions and his livelihood as inviolable. Just as it is a grave sin to exercise the rights and duties of the marital relationship at specified periods when this is forbidden (ואל אשָׁה נָדָה), so, too, in deciding whether or not to accept charity, he must weigh carefully in each instance whether it is his duty to accept such help or whether his acceptance of alms would constitute a serious transgression (see פ"ח (כל מי שצורך ליטול אוינו וועל הרי זה שוקן רמיים) פ"ט).

**וְאִישׁ יְגַלֵּל:** He keeps away from any act of exploitation of the weakness of another for one's own advantage" (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 25,14). **חֻכָּבֶשׁ:** He considers it his sacred duty to return, at the prescribed time, any pledge he has taken from his neighbor, lest he become guilty of "robbery." Consider this wide application of the legal concept of **גַזְלָה**.

**וְאִישׁ לֹא יְגַלֵּל:** He zealously guards against any act that the Torah defines as **גַזְלָה**. Any food or garment that he withholds from a poor man would become **גַזְלָה** in his hands. Unlawful gain from a loan one has granted to a fellow Jew would be **גַלְלָה** (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,15), an exploitation of his own "higher" or "upper" (על) social position granted him by God. **מְשֻׁפְטָה אַמְתָּה:** In every aspect of his social life he will seek to consider the "legitimate rights" of his fellow man. Of course, in order to be able to meet these requirements, he must subordinate every phase of his life to the limits set by God (בְּחֻקֹּתִי יְהֹוָה), and it is to God that he must look also for the **לְשׂוֹת אַמְתָּה ... מְשֻׁפְטִים** that do not serve expediency but enable him to fulfill the moral requirements

10. And then he begets a son who has broken all bounds, who should be considered as having shed blood even if he (had neglected) only one of these (precepts) in his dealings with his brother;

11. He has not fulfilled any of them; he has even eaten facing the mountains; he has defiled his neighbor's wife:

12. But he has wronged the poor and the dependent, committed robbery, has failed to return

וְהוֹלֵד בָּרוּךְ רַיִשׁ שָׁפֵךְ נָם  
עֲשָׂה אֶחָד מִאַחֲרֵי מַאֲלָה:

וְהַזֹּא אֲתִיכְלֵא לֹא עָשָׂה כִּי  
נָם אַלְהָרִים אָכֵל וְאֲתִדְאַשֵּׁת  
רַעַשוֹ פְּמָא:

וְעַנִּי וְאַבְיוֹן הַונֶּה גִּלּוֹת בָּזָל

of a moral society. For only the **משפטים** of God are **נָמָס** (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 19,10).

*Verses 10–13.* The son of this righteous father has forfeited his right to life by disregarding the principles by which his father lived.

*Verse 10.* A father who regards it as his most sacred duty to live according to the Laws of God has the misfortune to have a son who has "broken all the bounds" (מִרְצֵחַ) that form a hedge around the life of a man. It is difficult to explain the word **נָם** in this context. The text of Verse 18 would suggest the interpretation of **נָם** as "brother." **שָׁבֵךְ**: with accentuation as in Chapter 23, Verse 25, "to deal with" or "to do unto" another. The thought expressed here would then be that this depraved son could already have been labeled as a **שָׁוֹקֵךְ דָם**, a "murderer," even if he had neglected only one of the precepts of social justice in his relationships with his fellow man (cf. **אֶל חָנוּ אִישׁ אֶת אֶחָיו**). But he has done much more than that.

*Verses 11–12.* He has trampled upon God's own **חוּקִים** and **משפטים**. He laughs at God's **חוּקִים** and, by so doing, has also rejected all of God's **משפטים**. For **משפטים** cannot be separated from **חוּקִים** (Verse 5), as is indicated by the grouping of the son's transgressions and by the variations in the text; i.e. there is no mention here of **זָאֵל אֲשֵׁה נָדָה וּבָרָה** (see Verse 6). But the list includes **גִּלּוֹת נָלָן** (plural instead of the singular **גִּלּוֹה** as in Verse 7). He commits acts of robbery; he disregards the sacred rights of his neighbor not only with regard to the laws of personal morality, which forbid him **לְקַרְבָּן אֲלֵיכֶם**, but also in matters of social ethics. In the present verse, the words **בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל** (Verse 6) are interpolated among the social transgressions; hence also the generalization **אֶל הַגִּלּוֹלִים**: since he no longer recoils from **גִּלּוֹלִי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל**.

a pledge, lifted up his eyes to the outrages, has committed abominations;

**13.** Has lent at interest and accepted increase—shall he then live? He must not live! He has committed all these abominations; he shall surely be put to death; his blood will fall back upon him.

**14.** And behold, he begets a son who has seen all the sins of his father, which he committed, and he saw it and has not acted in this manner:

**15.** He has not eaten upon the mountains, has not lifted up his eyes to the outrages of the house

ובְּלֹא יִשְׁוֹב וְאֶל-הַגָּלוּם נִשְׁאָה  
וַיְגַנֵּב תֻּמְכָה עֲשָׂה:

וְבָנָשׁ גָּנָן וַתְּרַבֵּית לְקָח וְתִּזְבַּח  
אֲיוֹחֶה אֶת כָּל-הַתְּעוּבּוֹת הָאֱלֹהִים  
שֶׁהָמֹת יוֹמָת דָּקְיוֹ בּוֹ יִהְיֶה:

וְהַנֶּה הַלְּדִיד בָּן וַיְרָא אֶת-כָּל-  
טְעַת אָבִיו אֲשֶׁר עֲשָׂה וַיַּרְא אֶלָּא  
צְשָׁה בָּהּ:

וְעַל-הַהָּרִים לֹא אָכֵל וְעַינָּיו

ראה קרי

he also no longer endeavors to keep his social life clear of transgressions that are regarded as not only by Jews but by all mankind.

The father (Verse 7) did not differentiate between rich and poor but the son makes his neighbor feel his affliction precisely because that unfortunate individual is needy and dependent on his help. **עַשָּׂה:** As regards social transgressions, the Word of God (Deuteronomy 25,10) has pronounced this harsh condemnation: חֲרוּבָת הַאֲלִקְזָן כָּל עַשָּׂה אֶלָּה כָּל פְּשָׂת (Hence the contrast to מַעַל יִשְׁבֵּר יְדוֹ in Verse 8 is not pointed out in the present verse.)

**Verse 13.** מִי: Should such a son indeed be spared because of the merits of his father who was a righteous man? רְסִי יְהִי is the legal term for (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 20,2). נָרַך בְּחַמּוֹת בְּסִיקְלָה: h must feel the full weight of God's punishment.

**Verse 14.** On the other hand, take the case of a son whose father was wicked (**תָּמָם:** the father's whole life has been one great sin! **תָּמָם** is spelled without the 1 as if it were singular.); but the son shudders as he looks down the precipice before which he stands as a result of his father's evil deed (cf. Rashi's comment on the repetition of **וַיַּדְא** in Genesis 18,2) and firmly resolves not to follow his father's example.

**Verse 15.** על ההרים may have the same meaning as (Verse 6) or convey the thought in a more intensive manner; i.e., he saw how a dissolute

of Israel; his neighbor's wife he has not defiled;

16. He has not wronged anyone nor demanded a pledge; he has not committed robbery; he has given his bread to the hungry and covered the naked with a garment;

17. He has held back his hand from the poor; he has not accepted interest and increase; he has followed My ordinances and walked

לֹא נִשְׁא אֶל־גָּלְלֵי בַּיִת וּשְׂרָאֵל  
אֲתִיד־אֲשָׁת רְעָהוּ לֹא טְמָא:  
וְאִישׁ לֹא הָנַּה חַבֵּל לֹא חַבֵּל  
וְנוֹלָה לֹא בָּזֵל לְחֻמּוֹ לְרַעַב נָתַן  
עֲרָם כִּסְהָרָגָר:

17. מְעַנֵּי הַשִּׁיב יָדו גַּשְׁךְ  
וְתַּרְבִּית לֹא לְקַח מְשֻׁפְטֵי עֲשָׂה

life (the preposition **אל** denotes orientation, inclination) must lead to a state of affairs in which men lose all their human dignity and fall **על ההרים** (the preposition **על** denotes "upon," upon the rocks of materialist depravity).

*Verse 16.* **חַבֵּל** **לֹא** **חַבֵּל**: a particular security that cannot legally be taken as a pledge; e.g., **לֹא יַחֲבֵל דְּחִים וּרְכָב** (Deuteronomy 24.6). This formulation, which differs from that in Verse 7, might be explained as implying a broader interpretation (much as in Verse 12); i.e., as referring to the words in Verse 6 **אֶל אֲשָׁה דְּדָה** **לֹא יִקְרַב** that do not recur in Verse 15. The thought expressed in this verse would then be as follows: The Word of God that, in social relationships, sets limits to claims which, though justifiable *per se*, would infringe upon the rights of the other party concerned, is the same Law that has set limits also to the personal moral claims of the individual in that it restricts the marital rights of the husband by the prohibition **אֶל אֲשָׁה נָזָה** **לֹא יִקְרַב**. (Note that in Deuteronomy 24, 1-5, the prohibition **לֹא יַחֲבֵל** immediately follows laws relating to divorce and remarriage. This fact would likewise explain the statement of the Sages **הָרוֹא יִמְשָׁל בָּנָה**, **יִכְלֶל מְלָה** **אֶذ חַיל** **לֹא יַחֲבֵל דְּחִים וּרְכָב** (בראשית ר' רב' ט'כ); i.e., that the prohibition **לֹא יַחֲבֵל** is also the one that sets limits to the marital rights of a husband.)

*Verse 17.* **מְעַנֵּי הַשִּׁב יָדו**: He sees the **חרובה** that resulted from his father's (Verse 13). Because **מְעַנֵּי הַשִּׁב** **דו** (Verse 8) he, the son, keeps his hand far away from any act that would exploit his neighbor's weaknesses to his advantage, **מְעַנֵּי הַשִּׁב** **דו** he is extremely careful not to make the feel his "hand," his power. When he extends a loan to a needy man, he is mindful of the double prohibition against taking interest (see Verse 8). **גַּשְׁךְ וְתַּרְבִּית** **לֹא לְקַח** (see Verse 8). **מְשֻׁפְטֵם** **עֲשָׂה** **וּנוֹר**: here, the **מְשֻׁפְטֵם** come first and the **חוּקִים** only thereafter (as opposed to Verse 9) The son is struck, first of all, by his father's shocking disregard of the laws of social decency. He therefore resolves henceforth to

in My statutes—such a person shall not die for his father's sins; he shall surely live.

**18.** His father, since he has cruelly oppressed, robbed a brother and did among his people that which is not good—behold, he has died because of his sin.

**19.** But then you say: 'Why should the son not have to bear the sin of the father?' But the son practiced justice and righteousness, kept all My statutes and practiced them—he shall surely live!

**20.** It is the guilty soul alone that shall die; a son does not bear the guilt of the father, neither does

בְּחֻקֹּתִי הַלְּךָ הַוָּא לֹא יָמֹת בַּעֲזָן  
אֶבְיוֹ תְּלֵה יְחִיָּה:

18. אֶבְיוֹ כִּי־עָשָׂק עַשְׂק גָּזָל גָּזָל  
אָחָ וְאָשָׂר לְאָטָוב עָשָׂה בְּתוֹךְ  
עַפְנוֹ וְהַנְּהִרְקָת בַּעֲזָן:

19. וְאֶמְרָתֶם מַרְעָ לְאַדְנָשָׁא הַבָּן  
בַּעֲזָן הָאָב וְהַבָּן מִשְׁפָט וְצְדָקָה  
עָשָׂה אֶת בְּלִחֻקֹּתִי שְׁמָר וְנִזְאַשָּׂה  
אֶתְכֶם תְּלֵה יְחִיָּה:

20. הַגְּנָפֵשׁ הַחֲלֹטָת הִיא תָּמוֹת  
בֶּן לְאַדְנָשָׁא | בַּעֲזָן הָאָב וְאָבָל אָ

observe all of God's laws, **משפטים**, but he soon realizes that he cannot be separated from **חוקים**.

**יְחִיָּה:** he has won for himself the right to life.

**Verses 18–20.** The Prophet eloquently and incisively refutes the fatalistic notion that had become so deeply entrenched in many minds: namely, that a son, no matter how blameless he himself may be, is condemned for his father's transgressions. This dismal notion must be uprooted from the minds of the people once and for all, for otherwise all future pronouncements of the prophet may be to no avail. This would explain the Prophet's choice of strong language.

**Verse 18.** The fact that, in this verse, the social transgressions are grouped under the general heading of **נָסָר** and **עַשְׂק** would support the thoughts expressed in the foregoing notes. The last phrase, which also refers primarily to **בְּחֻקָּת עַמּוֹן** (cf. Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,16) to the transgressions of social and communal life, would seem to include all moral transgressions as well.

**Verse 19.** **אֲתָּה כִּי חֻקָּי:** without exception (see Verse 17); he studied the **חוקים** in order to observe them scrupulously (Leviticus 18,4: **אֲתָּה חַקְתִּי שָׁמַר לְלִכְתָּה**; see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.)

**Verse 20.** **צִדְקַת הַצִּדְיק עַלְיוֹן וְגַר:** refers to Verse 13; **רוּשָׁת רַשְׁעָה** refers to Verse 17. **אוֹתָהּ (נִחְיָב) רַשְׁעָה**: Even as the transgressions of a stranger who is a stranger to him will not affect his fate, so not even the sins that have been committed by

the father bear the guilt of the son; the righteous [man's] devotion to duty rests upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked rests upon him.

21. Yet even the wicked, if he turns away from all his sins which he committed and observes all My statutes and does justice and righteousness—he shall surely live; he shall not die.

22. All his crimes that he committed shall no longer be remembered against him; he shall live because of his acts of devotion to duty.

23. Do I, perhaps, require the death of the wicked, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice. Truly, if he returns from his ways, he will live!

24. But, if the righteous turns

ישא בענין הבן צדקהת האדריך  
עליו תחיה ורשות רשות עליו  
תחיה: ס

21. והרשות כי ישב מכל-חטאתו  
אשר עשה ושמור את-כל-חיקותי  
עשה משפט וצדקה חיה יוחנה  
לא ימות: ס

22. כל-פשעיו אשר עשה לא  
יזכרו לו בצדקהו אשר-צשנה  
תחיה: ס

23. החפץ אחפוץ מות רשות נאמ  
אלני נוהה הלווא בשובו מרכבי  
תחיה: ס

24. ובשוב צנוק טזרקהו מעשה  
הרשות קרי. הסאותו קרי.

his own father (**בָּבֶן**) cannot deprive the son of his right to live, which has been guaranteed by God Himself.

Verses 21–23. How could it be any different? The Divine summons to life reaches even the most hardened רשע and guarantees him the wondrous gift of Divine life. Why, then, should the son of such an individual be doomed simply because his father had sinned?

**ונא:** (טהייב) **ונא:** see Verse 14.

Verse 22. **כִּי**: This would be true even if he had committed his **ונא** (Verse 21) as **סְבִבּוֹת**, as deliberate acts of rebellion against God and His Law.

Verse 23. **זֶה**: God's fatherly goodness (**הַ**) in which He grants eternal life is revealed even when He acts in His quality of stern justice (**מִלְאָקַל**). He only waits for the moment when He can open the gates of renewed life to the repentant רשע.

Verse 24. On the other hand, the same Divine Providence that is ready

away from his devotion to duty and is guilty of misuse of power; he practices all the abominations committed by the wicked, should he then live? All the acts of duty that he performed will no longer be remembered because of his faithlessness that he committed and because of the sin that he sinned; because of them, he shall die.

**25.** But then you say: 'The way of my Lord is not consistent.' Listen, house of Israel, is My way perhaps not consistent? It is your ways that are not consistent!

עוֹל בְּכָל הַתּוֹעֲבֹת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה  
הַרְשָׁע יִשְׂחָה וְתֵי כָּל-צָרְלָתוֹ  
אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה לֹא תִזְכְּרָנָה בְּמַעַלְךָ  
אֲשֶׁר-מַעַל וּבְחַטָּאתוֹ אֲשֶׁר-  
נִטְאָ בָּם יָמוֹת:

וְאִמְרָתֶם לֹא יַתְכּוּ בָּרוּךְ אֱלֹהִים  
שְׁמֻעוּדָנָא בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּרוּכָיוּלָא  
יַתְכּוּ בְּלֹא דְּרָכִיכֶם לֹא יַתְכּוּנָ:

צְרָתוֹ קָרֵי.

to spread the "cover" of oblivion over the sinful past of any רֹשֶׁע who has resolved henceforth to observe all of His precepts will regard the defection of a צָרִיק from his former righteous way of life as a shameless repudiation of all the ideals that guided him in the past. In that case, all his good deeds of the past צָדְקָתוֹ [singular], even if all his previous life had been a continuous series of צָדְקָות will turn into accusers against him, charging him *a posteriori* with מעילה against the הָרָה. The "saintly" attitude and behavior he had displayed in the past have turned out to be just a disguise and hypocrisy (for an explanation of מעילה see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 5,15). God must therefore punish him not only for his present מִשְׁמָרָה but also for his past מעילה. For an explanation of בְּמַתָּה עַל וְעַשָּׂה עַל, see Chapter 3, Verse 20.

Verse 25. **טָה** denotes the numerical ratio of the individual parts of the whole to one another. לא יַתְכּוּ: "You think that it is completely out of character, inconsistent with (i.e., "out of all proportion") Divine Providence that one brief moment of wickedness can undo a past filled with good deeds" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 5,8). Of course, those who have become fixed in the notion that a soul must suffer for the sins of his father will be unable to understand the difference between God's judgment of the repentant sinner on the one hand and of the apostate righteous man, on the other. Nevertheless, this is the same Providence that will not make a son suffer for the transgressions of his father and that will give present and future righteousness a chance to overcome past sins. God knows only one בָּרוּךְ in judging His mankind (בָּרוּךְ יְהֹוָה), while these people see His Providence as דְּרָכִיכֶם, applying a double standard. דְּרָכִיכֶם לֹא יַחֲסֵט: Herein lies the whole absurdity of this notion.

**26.** If a righteous man turns from his devotion to duty and becomes guilty of misuse of power, and he dies as a result—it is only because of the misuse of power he has committed that he will die.

**27.** But if the wicked turns away from the evil he committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will preserve his soul in life;

**28.** For he has seen the error of his ways and has turned back from all his criminal acts which he committed; he shall live, he shall not die.

**29.** And yet they say, the house of Israel: 'The way of my Lord is not consistent.' Are My ways, perhaps, not consistent, house of Israel? Surely, of your ways, none is consistent!

**30.** Therefore I will judge each

בָּשׁוּב־אָצְדִּיק מֵאַרְקָתוֹ וְעַשָּׂה  
עוֹל וּמְתַעֲלָם בֶּעֱלוֹ אָשָׁר־  
עַשָּׂה יְמֹתָה: ס

זֶבֶשׁוּב רְשָׁע מְרַשְּׁעָתוֹ אָשָׁר  
עַשָּׂה וַיַּעֲשֵׂשׁ מְשֻׁפֵּט וְצַדְקָה הָזָה:  
אָתִי־גְּפָשׁוּ וְחַיָּה:

וְיוֹרָה וְשׁוֹב מְכֻלָּפְשָׁעָיו  
אָשָׁר עַשָּׂה חַיּוּ וְחַיָּה לֹא יְמֹתָה:

וְאִקְרָרוּ בֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יִתְבָּכוּ  
בְּנֵד אַלְגֵי תְּרֵבָה לֹא יִתְבָּכוּ בֵית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּלֹא דְרָכִים לֹא יִתְבָּכוּ:

לְכָן אִישׁ כְּדָרְבָיו אָשָׁפֵט  
יִתְוֹרָה.

**Verse 26.** *וְתַתְعַלְתָם:* He will suffer because of his present but also for having abandoned the *זרוקת* of the past (see Verse 22). A whole life has become one continuous *עוֹל*.

**Verse 29.** The *רְשָׁע* of God in judging both the *צדיק* and the *ונר* is a direct consequence of His Providence, as stated in Verse 20: *בְּנֵי ישָׂעָר נִצְחָן האָכְנוּ גָּנוּר*. However, to His people (*חַמְרָבוּ בֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל*) God's judgment appears *לֹא יִתְהַקֵּן* (contradictory, "not straight," because the righteous suffer and the wicked prosper *לֹא יִתְהַקֵּן*). But if we truly understand the meaning of *כָּן*, of God's personal Providence in the life of every individual, then we can understand that what appears to be a contradictory path (*דָרְכִים* plural) is in reality the same sole path and consequence of Divine Providence (*דָרְךָ הַסְּגָדָה* singular). You will comprehend the *Ways of Divine Providence* only if you discard your notion that *the Prophets* *הַבְּנִים חַקְדָּתָה* (Verse 2).

**Verse 30.** *לְכָן:* In the moving words that conclude this chapter, the Prophet

one of you according to his own ways, house of Israel, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice—return, and cause others to return from all your criminal acts, so that your guilt will not become your snare.

**31.** Cast away all your criminal acts with which you sinned, and make for yourselves a new heart and a new spirit—for why would you wish to die, house of Israel?

**32.** For I do not take pleasure in the death of one who has died, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice; cause [others to] return, and live!

proclaims the miraculous power of חשובה which can never be called in question by the פסל cited in Verse 2.

**איש כורכוי:** You will not be judged according to the sins of your fathers. **שובו:** return to God, **וחשיבו:** and cause others to return also (Rashi). Let your good example serve to inspire your brethren. **ילא יהיה נור:** Do not allow your עז to become your עז; do not think that your past can never be wiped out and that, therefore, you might as well continue to sin. Remember, there is a God Who has the power and the will to erase an entire past of sin.

**Verse 31.** It all depends on you. Your strength of character can accomplish a great deal. Cleanse yourselves by breathing into your own hearts a pure and resolute determination and by opening your spirit to all that is noble and Divine. God will then bestow טהורה upon you. You do not have to die; you can overcome death.

**Verse 32.** (ברכו) רשות בחייהם קידרין מרים (Verse 23); טהורה רשותה המה. Take this existence of yours that seems lost to true life, guide it back to the path of God גדי and you will live!

This is God's own summons to life proclaimed by the Prophet in his struggle against the פסל (אבות יאכלו במר משל (Verse 2), whose poisonous influence threatens to hinder the ascent of his people to the heights of wondrous rejuvenation. He sounds his call at the moment when he himself consigns the

אתכם בית ישראל נאים  
ארני יהוה שובו וחשיבו מך-  
פשעיכם לאדריה לך  
למכשול עון:

וא השליכו מעליכם את-דקל  
פשעיכם אשר פשעתם בם ותשׁו  
לכם לב חיש ורומת בראה ולמה  
תפטחו בית ישראל נאים  
**כיו לא אוחfine בכות הפטה נאים**  
ארני יהוה וחשיבו וחיו פ

**Chap. 19.** 1. But you, take up  
a lamentation for the princes of  
Israel,  
וַאֲתָה שְׁאַקִּינה אֶל־גְּשִׁיאֵי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

2. And say: What a lioness your  
mother once was! She reposed  
וַאֲמַרְתָּ מָה אָמַר לְבָנָא בָּן

worthless wood of the "vine" to the flames (Chapter 15) and sees the once mighty "cedar" of Jewish kingship wither away like a sad little vine (Chapter 17).

All the preceding leads up to the Prophet's elegy in Chapter 19.

**Chapter 19, Verse 1.** תְּהִינָה: This chapter is a direct continuation of the concluding verse of Chapter 18. קִינָה is a lamentation, an elegy, all the more moving because it was precisely within the power of "Israel's princes" to reverse the chain of events allegorically described in this dirge. For God's promise—חִזּוּ—applies to them no less than to the rest of the nation. If only they had remained true to their calling, they themselves and their people could have been spared all the sufferings which the Prophet has foretold. Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jeconiah and Zedekiah—the shame and the misery which marks the end of the line of Jewish kings is ample justification for the Prophet's elegy.

**Verse 2.** מִקְרָא is a metaphor, the "mother" of the Jewish royal line, as reflected in the patriarch Jacob's visionary blessings from his deathbed (Genesis 49,9). נָעַר is the lion cub; נְסִיר, the more mature, but still youthful, lion going forth in search of prey; אֲרָיה, the aged lion (see Genesis 10,8; Psalms 17,3; Nachum 2,12; also Hirsch Commentaries, ibid.).

וּלְאַרְיָה יְהֻדָה טֹסֶף כִּי פְּלִיחַ נְעַר רְבָץ סְרִירָה: "You combine in your person the courage of youth and the prudence of age; you have no desire to fight and plunder for the mere pleasure of it... Judah's greatness does not lie in the ability to fight and do battle.... Even when he is at rest he remains (imposing as) a lion; he shows a greatness that demands respect" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,3). בָּן אֲרָיוֹת רְבָצָה: While the powers round about her flaunted their leonine strength by making war and seeking new conquests, the "mother lion of Judah" knew how to gain respect for herself by quietly developing her own moral strength and greatness. It was for this lofty, Divinely-ordained calling that she reared her "young"—כָּתוּך נְפָרָט—amidst their rapacious peers who were eager to test their brute force on blood-drenched fields of battle.

But though she was at rest, was Judah not a **לְבָנָא בָּן**, a "flaming lioness"?

among old lions, among young (rapacious) lions did she rear her cubs.

3. And she raised one of her cubs; he became a rapacious lion, and he learned to go forth in search of prey; he devoured men.

4. Nations listened to him, but he was caught in their pit, and they brought him in shackling rings to the land of Mitzrayim.

5. When she saw that she was disappointed in her expectations, her hope lost, she took one of her cubs and made him into a rapacious lion.

(related to **להב**, "flame"—see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.) Alas that such a mother should have forgotten the paths the patriarch Jacob had shown her!

**Verse 3.** **וַיַּעֲלֶל** is a *hiph'il* of **עלָה**, "to raise" or "to train." The "mother lion" discarded her proven methods of raising and training the young. As a result, her child **כָּנִיר הַיָּה** became rapacious, all too soon taking pleasure in hunting for prey. The Jewish kings had lost their Jewish character. **אָדָם אָכֵל:** They had inflicted mortal wounds upon their own people who had been chosen to give to mankind the example of pure humanity (**אָדָם**, see Chapter 34, Verse 31) but who were now slowly bleeding to death under the rule of their kings. The image of Jehoahaz from the recent past appeared before the Prophet's eyes.

**Verse 4.** The roar of the lion attracted the attention of other nations. But those whom he had expected to become his allies in his search for prey turned on him instead. Shackled and exiled, Jehoahaz ended his days in Egypt (II Kings 23,33). **תְּרִז** is a ring used in shackles (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 35,22).

**Verse 5.** **וַיָּמֹלֶה** is a *niph'al* form of **מָלֵל**, "to await," "to look forward." "The passive form is used to express impotence, a feeling of frustration, of being hampered" (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 2,21). The mother lion's expectations were not realized. She was disappointed in her son. But instead of learning a lesson from this bitter experience and reverting to the proven ways of upbringing she had discarded, she placed the blame for her child's undoing on her failure to train him more diligently in the skills of being a **כָּנִיר**. And so she made up for lost time: she turned him into a **כָּנִיר שְׁמַחוֹן** (as distinct from **כָּנִיר הַיָּה** in Verse 3); she worked from the very beginning to make him a

אָרוֹת רַבָּצָה בְּתוֹךְ כְּפָרִים  
רַבְתָּה נָרוּרָה:

3. וַתַּתְּעַל אֶתְּרָד מְגֻרִיה בְּפִיר הַיָּה  
וַיַּלְמַד לְטַרְפָּטָרָפָ אָדָם אָכֵל:

4. וַיִּשְׁמַעוּ אֶלְיוֹנוֹ גּוֹם בְּשַׁחַתּוֹ  
נְחַטָּשׁ וַיַּכְאַרְוּ בְּחַחְקִים אַלְ-אָרֶץ  
מָצָרִים:

5. וַתַּרְא אֵין נָוְלָה אֶבֶן תְּקוֹתָה  
וַתַּקְחַ אֶתְּרָד מְגֻרִיה בְּפִיר שְׁמַחוֹן

6. He roamed freely among the old lions, a rapacious lion that learned to go forth in search of prey; he devoured men.

7. He came to know the widows that had been left to his mercy; he devastated their cities, and the land and its fullness froze at the noise of his roar.

8. Then the nations of the surrounding kingdoms spread their net over him; he was caught in their pit.

9. They confined him with shackling rings and brought him to the king of Babylon; they placed him into (one of) the fortresses so that his voice should no longer reach the mountains of Israel.—

10. But your mother was (also) like a vine—you were like (it): it

וַיֵּתְהַלֵּךְ בְּתוֹךְ־אָרֶנִיותָ כִּפּוֹר  
חַיָּה וַיַּלְמֹד לְטוּף־טֻרָף אֲרֵם אָכֵל:

וַיַּרְעַע אַלְמָנוֹתָיו וְעוֹרִיקָם הַחֲרִיב  
וַתַּשְׁם אָרֶץ זָמָלָה מִקּוֹל שָׁאנְתָה:

וַיִּתְהַנֵּן עַלְיוֹנוֹים סְבִיבָם מִמְרִינּוֹת  
וַיִּפְרֹשֵׂו עַלְיוֹנוֹ רְשָׁתָם בְּשַׁחַתָּם  
נַתְּפֵשָׁה:

וַיִּתְגַּנְגֵּנוּ בְּסָגָר בְּחַחִים וּבְאָרוֹן  
אַלְמָלֵךְ בְּכָל וּבְאָרוֹן בְּמִצְרָיוֹת  
לְפָעֵן לְאִישָׁכָּעַ קָוָלוּ עוֹד אַל־  
הָרָיו יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

אַפְּקָעַ כְּגַפְוָן בְּרַקְעַעַ עַל־מִים:

proficient in כְּפִיר. And the young lion certainly did credit to her training, amply proven by the reign of Jehoiakim.

*Verse 6.* This young lion of Judah roamed freely among the "old lions," the great powers of the ancient world, in complete disregard of the timeless Divine precepts by which he should have lived. He became a true רְלָמָר וּרְבָרָבָר:

*Verse 7.* His "power" was felt by defenseless women—אַלְמָנוֹתָיו—as in Genesis 19,5) whose husbands he had killed (Rashi). He destroyed whole cities, and the land froze in terror at his mighty roar (II Kings 23,35). The lion of Judah had come a long way.

*Verse 8.* But, at God's command, (Chapter 24, Verse 2), the peoples of the neighboring kingdoms had spread their nets to catch this unruly predator. רְחַטָּם is the object of the verb רְחַטָּה.

*Verse 9.* This "lion" met an even more dismal end than his predecessor (Verse 4). The Babylonian mountain fortress in which he had been imprisoned was too far away for his roars to reach the distant "mountains of Israel." A bitter irony indeed!

*Verse 10.* But after Jeconiah had suffered the same fate as Jehoiakim, had

was planted by the waters; it was fruitful and full of shoots due to the abundance of water.

**11.** It had rods of invincibility which it used as scepters of sovereignty, and its stature was high above leafy trees; it was conspicuous by the abundance of its tendrils.

**12.** But it was uprooted, cast down to the ground in anger; and the east wind caused its fruit to

שׁתְּוָלה פָּרִיה ועֲנָפָה הִוִּיתָ  
כַּפְּרִים רְבִים:

וַיְהִי־לֹה מְטוֹת עַז אֶשְׁבָּטִי  
מְשֻׁלִּים וְתָגְבָּה קָומָתוֹ עַל־בֵּין  
עַבְתִּים וַיָּרָא בָּעֵבֶר בְּרֵב דְּלִיּוֹתָיו

וַתִּתְּשַׂח בְּחִמָּה לְאָרֶץ הַשְּׁלָכָה  
וּרוֹת הַקָּרִים הַוְּכִישׁ פָּרִיה

not Zedekiah changed his mind and abandoned his former notion that the kings of Judah had to behave like strong, rapacious lions? Did he not recall the words of his great forebear Jacob, who had portrayed the "mother" of the Jewish royal line not only as a lion at rest but also as a quietly growing vine? "He bathed his garment in wine, his mantle in the blood of grapes" (Genesis 49,11). All that Zedekiah wanted was to maintain his kingdom as a peaceful vine against Babylonian aggression (Chapter 17, Verse 8). But these thoughts evoke in the Prophet renewed and utter distress. *kol infinitive* of "to compare." שׁתְּוָלה refers to צָבָא.

To be sure, the royal line of Judah was meant to be like a vine, for was not all of Israel "the vine which God had carried off out of Egypt" (Psalms 80,9)? Planted by God and firmly rooted beside His waters, it was intended to bear luscious fruit.

**Verse 11.** **טְבַנּוֹת זֶה:** Judah was to have "rods (i.e., branches) of invincibility" to serve as the scepters of its rulers. "מֵהֶם צָרָעָר תִּסְצִיר" "The Lord will send the rod of your invincibility out of Zion," the Psalmist (Psalms 110,2) sang of the Davidian dynasty. As long as the royal vine took its sturdy branches from Zion and received its waters from Zion's wellsprings, it grew taller than all the leafy trees (עַבְתִּים) that surrounded it. "The water flows from His buckets, and it is His seed that is at the abundant flow" (בְּמִטְרָבִים, see Verse 10). "Therefore his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted" (לִלְמִים) (Numbers 24,7).

**Verse 12.** But alas! the vine forgot that it had been planted by God; that was its undoing. Zedekiah's attempts to nourish the vine from the "natural" waters that seemed present in abundance (Chapter 17, Verse 8) were in vain. Since the vine had already been uprooted by God's wrath, its fruits withered

wither; they were severed and they withered—the rod of its invincibility was consumed by fire.

**13.** And now it is planted in the wilderness, in arid, parched land,

**14.** And the fire spread from the rod of its branches; it consumed its fruit; it no longer had the rod of its invincibility as a scepter to rule. This is a lamentation; it has become a lamentation.

**Chap. 20.** 1. It came to pass in the seventh year, in the fifth, on

הַחֲפֹרְךָ וּבֶשֶׁ מַפְתָּח עֲזָה אָשָׁ אֲכַלְתָּהָז

13. וְעַתָּה שְׁתוּלָה בַּמְדָבָר בָּאָרֶץ  
צִיָּה וְצַמְאָה:

14. וַתֵּצֵא אָשׁ מַפְתָּח בְּדִין פְּרִנָּה  
אֲכַלָּה לְאַדְנָה בְּהַמְּפָתָה־דָּעַ שְׁבָט  
לְמַשְׁול קָוָה הִיא וְתַהֲיוּ לְקָוָה פָּ

כִּי וַיְהִי | בָּשָׂנָה הַשְׁבִּינִית

as soon as the storms swept over it from the east (Chapter 17, Verse 10). The "rod of invincibility" which he had thought he could continue to hold even independently of the ideals symbolized by Zion was consumed in the flames (Chapter 15).

*Verse 13.* The Prophet deplores bitterly the absence of the "abundant waters" (Chapter 17, Verse 8) or the waters of irrigation that were expected to promote the growth of the vine (Chapter 17, Verse 10). As far as Ezekiel can see, the vine of Zedekiah has been planted in a wilderness, in an arid wasteland, because its waters do not come from the buckets of God.

*Verse 14.* The vine consumes itself. The flames flare up from the *מַפְתָּח בְּדִין*. That was the cause of the disaster. The vine thought that it would be able to manage without the *מַפְתָּח* that could come only from Zion. The king's rod had been carved from the branches of the vine itself (*מַפְתָּח בְּדִין*) and so the ruler was forced to watch, utterly helpless, while the flames consumed the "rod of invincibility" he had intended to use as his royal scepter.

*אֲכַלְתָּהָז:* This is indeed a lamentation, *אֲכַלְתָּהָז*; it has become an elegy in advance of future events, the Prophet adds sadly. In his prophetic vision he already sees the worthless wood of the vine destroyed (Chapter 15), for Zedekiah had no ear for the Word of God which could have guided him back to the true path of life even at this late hour (Chapter 18, Verse 32).

**Chapter 20.** The words recorded in Chapters 8 to 19 were spoken in the sixth year after the deportation of Jeconiah (Chapter 8). The years that followed saw no change in the Prophet's activities. Hence, Chapters 20 to 23 will

the tenth of the month, that men from among the elders of Israel came to seek God, and they sat before me.

2. And the word of God came to me:

בְּחַמְשִׁי בָּעֶשֶׂר לְחֶרֶשׁ בָּאֹו  
אֲנָשִׁים מִזְקָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְדֶרֶשׁ  
אֲתִידְיוֹתָה וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ לִפְנֵי סֵם  
וַיֹּאמֶר רְבָרִירְךָ אֱלֹהִים לְאַכְרָה:

not introduce any new themes of significance. Yet the events which the Prophet repeatedly foretold to his *golah* came menacingly closer with every passing year. This realization lends added force to the Prophet's message. With increasingly frightening clarity, he describes events designed to unsettle even the most persistent "optimists." The tenth day of the fifth month, the day on which the impending catastrophe would strike the Jewish nation (Jeremiah 52,12) and on which "men from among the elders of Israel" would in panic try to seek out the Prophet (see *רְדָך*), casts its dark shadows over the three chapters that now follow.

We have already met these so-called "leaders" of the Jewish people in Chapter 14 (see our commentary, *ibid.*) and have come to know their dishonest character. The brusque reception accorded them by the Prophet at that time has not deterred them from seeking him out once more. However, it seems that there has been a considerable change in their attitude during the months that have passed since their first meeting. Increasingly apprehensive, they apparently decided to abandon the diplomatic reticence they had deemed proper in the past (Chapter 14, Verse 1). Note the plural form *אוֹבָד* in Verse 1 of the present chapter as distinct from the singular *וַיַּכְנֵן* in the opening verse of Chapter 14. There it implies that every single one of them was motivated by his own personal desire to see the Prophet. The purpose of their visit was already clear from the very beginning: *לְדוֹרֶשׁ*. But we already know what *דוֹרֶשׁ* really means (see our commentary on Chapter 14, Verse 3) as opposed to the purpose they had in mind. And so the Prophet knew that he could not send them away with the same curt answer as that recorded in Chapter 14. There was a good reason for this: it had not escaped God's attention that the desire of these men *לְדוֹרֶשׁ* was motivated by intention, that threatened the very survival of the Jewish people. This is clear from Verse 32 of the present chapter. In their opinion, God had no other choice but to "make Himself accessible" to them, for if He would not come to the aid of His people, the bond that tied the people of Israel to God would be severed. If He were thus to abandon His people to their enemies it would mean that He had dismissed them from His service and that they were therefore free to disengage themselves from His Law (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 15,23). This absurd notion had to be laid to rest once and for all. The Prophet

3. Son of mankind, speak with the elders of Israel and say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken. God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Have you, perhaps, come to seek Me? As I live, I will not let Myself be sought by you, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

4. But if you are willing; if you are indeed willing to take up their cause, son of mankind, [then] make them aware of the abominations of their fathers.

5. Say to them: Thus has my

3. בָּנְךָ אֱלֹהִים דָּבַר אֶת־זֹקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאֹמְרָתָ אֲלֵיכֶם בַּהֲ אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי יְהֻוָּה  
תַּלְרְשֵׁחַ אֲתִי אֶפְסֵם בְּאַיִם חִרְאָנִי  
אָסֵד־אָרְנֵשׁ לְכֶם נָאָם אֶלְעָנִי יְהֻוָּה:

4. הַתְשִׁפְטוּ אֶתְכֶם הַתְשִׁפְטוּ  
בָּנְאָרָם אֶת־תְּחֻצְּבָת אֲנֹכֶתְכֶם:  
הַוּרִיעָם:

5. וְאֹמְרָתָ אֲלֵיכֶם כַּה־אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי

therefore had to address these men as זקנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, the leaders of the Jewish people (Verse 3), but in fact his response was meant for נִתְיִשְׂרָאֵל (Verse 27). The entire nation was to be preserved from such errors for all time.

*Verse 3.* God will not make Himself accessible to "leaders" such as these. For only he who truly seeks God's guidance, who regards הָנָה as a living God, as the God of his entire existence, has the right to ask for God's help (see notes on Chapter 14,3).

*Verse 4.* מִשְׁפָט is to champion the rights of another; to help someone assert his rights (see Isaiah 1,17; also Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, ט במדבר). They have for now lost their right to ask for God's help, but they still have the right, and therefore also the duty, to continue to regard themselves as the people of God and to become worthy of His help once more by faithfully observing His Law. הַחֲשֹׁפֵת: If you are ready to undertake this difficult task (this thought is underscored by the repetition of the verb מִשְׁפָט) of helping your people to understand that the right to God's nearness must be earned, then you must make them aware of the abominations committed by their forefathers. The only way in which you can prepare the ground for such a change of heart is by recalling to them the most important stages of Jewish history, the momentous events that led to the election of Israel as the nation of God, and the way in which that nation then kept the Law of God. In sum, as the Prophet puts it, this is a history of the מעשׂות committed by that nation.

*Verse 5.* This verse recalls the time when the Jewish people was chosen

Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: On the day when I chose Israel and lifted up My hand to the descendants of the house of Yaakov and made Myself known to them in the land of Mitzrayim and lifted up My hand to them, saying: I, ה, shall be your God.

6. On that day I lifted up My hand to them to lead them out from the land of Mitzrayim into a land that I had sought out for them, one flowing with milk and honey, a desirable goal for all lands;

7. And I said to them: Let every man cast off the abominations to which his eyes are drawn, and do not defile yourselves with the idolatries of Mitzrayim; I, ה, shall be your God.

יְהוָה בַּיּוֹם בְּחִרֵי בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֲשֶׁר  
בְּרִי לְוָרֶעֶת בֵּית יִצְחָק וְאָוֹרֶעֶת לְהַמִּ  
בְּאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וְאַשְׁאָה בְּרִי לְהַמִּ  
לְאֹמֶר אָנָּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים:

6. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא נִשְׁאַתִּי בְּרִי לְהַמִּ  
לְהַזְׁכִּיאָם מִצְרָאֵת מִצְרָיִם אֶל-אָרֶץ  
אֲשֶׁר-תְּרַתְּתִּי לְהַמִּזְבְּחָת חַדְבָּרֶת  
אֲכַבֵּי הָיָה לְכָל-הָאָרֶצֶת:

7. וְאֹמֶר אֶל-הַמִּזְבְּחָת אִישׁ שְׁקוֹצֵי עִינָיו  
הַשְׁלִיכֵו וּבְגַלְולֵי מִצְרָיִם אֶל-  
תְּפַתְּפָאוּ אָנָּי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים:

by God for its vocation as (בְּרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל) Israel, when God intervened in history to keep the vow He had once made to the forefathers of this people (לְוָרֶעֶת בֵּית) who are now powerless to repel their foes. God had never forgotten His promise for even a moment: וְאָרֶא אֶל אָבָרָהָם וְגַר וְמַקְתָּה אֶת בְּרִיתִי (Exodus 6,3-4). All the events of the past served only to prepare the ground for the revelation of God as ה, in a manner never experienced by their ancestors. אָדוֹעַת הַמִּזְבְּחָת—(as explained in greater detail in Verse 6) to the obligation His people had assumed, also under oath, to fulfill the destiny assigned to them by God. God raises His hand to them, as it were, to take an oath, proclaiming ה אֱלֹקִיכֶם. Henceforth, ה will be the Master over their lives (as explained in Verse 7). **לֹכֶד אָמַר לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנָּי הִי—וְלֹקַחְתִּי וְגַר הַיִּתְהַיִּי** (as explained in Verse 8): nothing more and nothing less.

**Verse 6.** **to a land** תְּרַתִּי (חוֹר), see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 13,2), "the environment most conducive to the fulfillment of Israel's mission."

**Verse 7.** Under the terms of the proclamation ה the Jewish people were expected to renounce all the reprehensible and inhuman ideas and acts they had encountered in the land of Egypt. This stipulation was

8. But they disobeyed Me and refused to listen to Me; not everyone cast off the abominations to which his eyes were drawn, and they did not abandon the idolatries of Mitzrayim. I thought to pour out My anger upon them so that I might cause My anger to cease by turning it against them—in the midst of the land of Mitzrayim.

9. However, I acted for My Name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations in whose midst they dwelt, before

וַיִּמְرֹבֶּבֶן וְלֹא אָכְבֵּל שְׁמִעַת אֱלֹהִים  
אֲיַש אֶת־שְׁקוֹצִי עַיִנּוּת לֹא  
הַשְׁלִיכוּ וְאֶת־גָּלוּלִי מְצֻרִים לֹא  
עָזַבְוּ וְאָמַרְתִּי לְשָׁפֵךְ חַמְתִּי עַלְיָהֶם  
לְכָלֹות אֲפִי בָּהֶם בְּתוֹךְ אָרֶץ  
מְצֻרִים:

וְאָעַשְׂלֵמָעַן שְׁמוֹ לְכָלֹתִי הַתּוֹלֵד  
לְעִינֵּי הַגּוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר־תְּעַמֵּד בְּתוֹכָם

subsequently reaffirmed by the words (משכו וקטו משבחו וורה והרכבו נמצוח) (Exodus 12,21) at the hour of Israel's deliverance (פסכו ידיכם משבחה וורה והרכבו נמצוח).

*Verse 8.* But that nation of oppressed people was not ready for this great historic moment. *ולא שפטו אל פשה* מCKER רוח ומעברה קשה (Exodus 6,9). This is explained by the comment of the Sages: *שהיה קשה להם לפרש משבחה וורה*. The reception accorded by the Hebrew slaves to the message of deliverance was not as joyous as might have been expected, for the condition God had attached to their liberation, namely, to abandon idolatry, seemed to them too difficult. Could God, at that time, not have been expected to pour out His wrath upon them immediately in order to eliminate the cause of His anger? Would the Children of Israel not have deserved to perish in Egypt?

*Verse 9.* But God had decided otherwise. From the very beginning, the aim of Divine Providence had been to elevate this people to become God's own nation. In the midst of a demoralized world, one nation was to emerge that would be ready to serve as bearers of the Name of God and thus proclaim the true destiny of all mankind. For this reason God revealed Himself in the life of His people as *וְהַ*, in His quality as the almighty Ruler of both nature and history. Henceforth the Name of God and the recognition of its majesty were to be inextricably bound up with this one nation. If God did not want to desecrate (*נִפְחָל*, *niph'al*, infinitive) His own holy Name, as it were, He could not cease to work upon the education of His people so that they truly become the nation of God. This eternal truth had been confirmed even while the Children of Israel were still in Egypt: this people should never renounce the destiny assigned to it by God. Let "Israel's elders" (Verse 3) study the documents of the history of their people and they will find the answer to the

whose eyes I had made Myself known to them to lead them out from the land of Mitzrayim.

**10.** And I led them out from the land of Mitzrayim and brought them into the wilderness.

**11.** I gave them My statutes and made known to them My ordinances which a man must follow and through which he gains life.

**12.** I also gave to them My Sabbaths that they may be a sign

אֲשֶׁר נָרַעְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם  
לְהֹזִיאָם מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

וְאֹוֹצִיאָם מִאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם  
וְאֶבְכָּאָם אֶל-הַפְּרָבָּר:

וְנִתְּנוּ לָהֶם אֶת-חִקּוֹתִי וְאֶת-  
מִשְׁפָּטִי הַרְאֻתִי אֲוֹתָם אֲשֶׁר  
יִשְׁשָׁה אֲוֹתָם הָאָרֶם וְתַּחֲנִמָּה:

וְגַם אֶת-שְׁבָתוֹתִי נִתְּנִי לָהֶם

question whether the temporary loss of God's nearness, caused by Israel's own conduct, could ever be cited by Israel as a reason to "free" itself from God's Law. This could be a travesty of Jewish history!

*Verse 10.* The record of the wanderings of the Children of Israel through the wilderness confirms this truth over and over again.

*Verse 11.* God gave the Law to His people; He gave them חוקים in order to import moral purity upon the physical aspects of their lives, and so משפטים so that their social relationships might be structured in accordance with Divinely ordained truth; וּמְשֻׁפְטִים בְּלִדּוּתָם (Psalms 147,30) because men cannot draw up their own משפטים. Those who wish to attain fulfillment of their human destiny can achieve true life only by observing the חוקים and משפטים of God. The Prophet refers clearly to Leviticus 18,5; it reflects the full measure of the grace which God bestowed upon His people when He chose them to be the upholders of His Word in the midst of mankind.

*Verse 12.* And God gave His people the Sabbath. Here, too, the Prophet points out the importance of the Sabbath by citing, word for word, the passage from Exodus 31,13. For the Sabbath day, which recurs each week, is the most prominent symbol (אות) by which God acknowledges us and we, in turn, acknowledge His rulership. לְרוּעָה, the Sabbath seeks to make us aware—**“אני ה’”**—that it is God Who desires to make us holy. This is the true meaning of holiness: God has set us apart from all the others and appointed us to His service. (See Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 31,13). So long as we will observe the Sabbath in truth we will remain the nation of God, the instrument glorifying Him as the Creator and Master of all mankind.

As examples of Israel's transgressions in the wilderness, the Prophet has chosen two incidents that threatened the very survival of the Jewish people: one of these was an act of rebellion against God's משפטים; the other, a

between Me and them, to know that I, God, am sanctifying them.

13. But the house of Israel was disobedient to Me in the wilderness; they did not walk in My statutes and they despised My ordinances which a man must follow and through which he gains life, and they greatly profaned My Sabbaths, and I thought to pour out My anger upon them in the wilderness to annihilate them.

14. However, I acted for My Name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations before whose eyes I had led them out.

15. But I also lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness [vowing] that I would not bring them to the land that I had given, flowing with milk and honey, a desirable goal for all lands.

16. For they despised My ordinances and did not walk in My

להנوت לאות בינו ובינויהם לרעת  
כיו אני והוה מקודש:

ז. וימקרודְּבָּבִי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּמַרְגָּר בְּחֻקֹּתִי לְאֶהָלָכוּ וְאַתְּ  
מְשֻׁפְטִי קָאָסֶוּ אֲשֶׁר יַעֲשֶׂה אָתָם  
הָאָרֶם וְתוּ בָּהָם וְאַתְּ שְׁבָתָתִי  
חַלְלוּ סָאָר וְאַפְרֵר לְשָׁפֵךְ חַקְתִּי  
עַלְיָהָם בְּמַרְגָּר לְכָלֹתָם:

ט. וְאַעֲשֶׂה לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לְכָלָתִי  
הַחַלְלָעִינִי הַנוּם אֲשֶׁר הַזָּאתִים  
לְעַזְיָהָם:

י. וְגַם־אָנִי נְשֹׂאָתִי יְרִי לְהָם  
בְּמַרְגָּר לְכָלָתִי הַבָּא אָתָם אֶל־  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נָתָתִי זְבַת חַלְבִּי  
וּרְבָשׂ אַבִּי הִיא לְכָלָה אֶרְצֹות:

ט'. מְעַן בְּמְשֻׁפְטִי קָאָסֶוּ וְאַתְּ  
חֻקֹּתִי לְאֶהָלָכוּ בָּהָם וְאַתְּ

transgression of His **תְּחִזְקִים**. In both instances it was God's Sabbath that was trodden underfoot.

*Verses 13–17.* These verses dwell on the sin involving the **תְּרִגְלִים** (travelers) that is able to structure its social relationships based on God's **שְׁפָטִים** (ordinances) might surely be expected to put its trust also in God's pledge that it would be given possession of the land. The faintheartedness and defiance displayed by the nation at that time show the utter contempt in which they held God's Word (מְשֻׁפְטִים מְאָסֶוּ), as if men did not need the Word of God to govern their social relationships as well as their political future. It is in order to stress the gravity of such mindless behavior that, in this instance (i.e., in Verse 16), the prophet placed **מְשֻׁפְטִים** before **חַקְתִּים**. But by their conduct they had also grossly violated (חַלְלוּ טָהָר) the Sabbath, for they showed that they no longer recognized God as the God of history for which the Sabbath is the eternal

statutes and profaned My Sabbaths, for their hearts were willing to go after their idolatries.

**17.** But My eye spared them from annihilating them, and I did not prepare destruction for them in the wilderness.

**18.** And I said to their sons in the wilderness: Do not walk in the statutes of your fathers, do not observe their ordinances and do not defile yourselves with their idolatries.

**19.** I, הָנָה, shall be your God: walk in My statutes and observe and follow My ordinances.

**20.** And hallow My Sabbaths and they shall be as a sign between Me and you, to know that I, הָנָה, shall be your God.

**21.** But the sons were disobe-

שְׁבָתוּתִי חֲלֹלוּ כִּי אַחֲרֵי גְּלֹולִים  
לְבָם הַלְּדָה:

וְתַּחַטְּפֶם עַיִּנִי עַלְيָם מִשְׁחַתָּם  
וְלֹא־עֲשִׂיתִי אֹתָם כֵּלָה בְּפָרֶבֶר:

וְאָמַרְתִּי אֶל־בְּנֵיכֶם בְּמִרְבָּר  
בְּחֻנְקִי אֶבְכֹּתִיכֶם אֶל־תְּלָכֶבֶר  
וְאֶת־מִשְׁפְּטֵיכֶם אֶל־תְּשִׁמְרוּ  
וּבְגַלְילֵיכֶם אֶל־תִּתְטַמֵּאֽוּ:

וְאַנְיוֹנָה אֶל־יְהִיבָם בְּחֻקֹּתִי לְבָבוֹ  
וְאֶת־מִשְׁפְּטֵי שְׁמָרוּ וְעָשָׂו אֹתָם:

וְאֶת־שְׁבָתוּתִי קְרַבְשִׁו וְהַזִּוִּי  
לְאוֹת בֵּינוֹ וּבֵינוֹכֶם לְרַעַת כִּי אַנְיִ  
וּתְהִנָּה אֶל־יְהִיבָם:

וְיִמְרֹדְכָּי הַבְּנִים בְּחֻקֹּתִי לֹא־

symbol. Even within sight of the land that was intended as the role model for all lands (Verse 15), they clung to the גְּלֹולִים of Egypt and, as a result, lost their own secured future. However, God raised a new generation in the wilderness to uphold His timeless Law (Verse 17).

*Verses 18–21.* At the graves of their parents in the wilderness the new generation of the Children of Israel was to be trained as the people of God, ready to take permanent possession of the land God had promised to them. The truth that had first been proclaimed in Egypt (Verse 7), אַנְיִ הָנָה אֱלֹקֵיכֶם, was to be translated, at last, into reality in the life of the Children of Israel. But this could be achieved only if the people accepted God's שְׁקָם and His מִשְׁפְּטִים. In Leviticus 18.4, the fulfillment of God's stipulation is cited as a condition for the realization of שְׁמָרוּ וְעָשָׂו. And the observance of the Sabbath will pave the way to the attainment of this objective (Verse 20).

In the catastrophe of the מִרְגָּלִים incident the Children of Israel had shown their contempt (Verse 16) for God's מִשְׁפְּטִים. Henceforth they would have to understand that מִשְׁפְּטִים have to be studied in the school of God שְׁמָרוּ וְעָשָׂו); this is the meaning of שְׁמָר—see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.

dient to Me; they did not walk in My statutes and they did not observe My ordinances to follow them which a man must follow and through which he gains life; they profaned My Sabbaths—and I thought to pour out My anger upon them so that I might cause My anger to cease by turning it against them in the wilderness.

22. However, I withdrew My hand and I acted for My Name's sake, that it should not be profaned in the eyes of the nations before whose eyes I had led them out.

23. But I had (already) lifted up My hand to them in the wilderness to disperse them some day among the nations and to scatter them among the lands;

הָלְכוּ וְאֶת־מְשֻׁטָּרִי לֹא־שָׁמְרוּ  
לְעֲשֹׂות אָתָם אֲשֶׁר יִעַשָּׂה  
אָתָם הָאָרֶם וְתַּנְהֵן בָּהֶם אֶת־  
שְׁבָתוֹתִי חָלְלוּ וְאָמַר לְשָׁפָךְ  
חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם לְכָלֹת אֲפִי בְּנֵם  
בְּמִרְאֶבֶן:

וְהַשְׁלַׁתִּי אֶת־יִרְאִי וְאַעֲשֵׂה לְמַעַן  
שָׁמְרֵי לְכָלֹת הַחֵל לְעֵינֵי הַנוּיוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר־הָצַאַתִּי אָתָם לְעֵינֵיכֶם:

כִּי־אָנִי נְשַׁאֲתִי אֶת־יִרְאִי לְכֶם  
בְּמִרְאֶבֶן לְהַפִּיצֵּנִי אַתֶּם בְּנוּיוֹם  
וְלֹאֲרוֹת אָתָם בְּאָרֶצֹת:

The words וּבְגִלְעָדָם אֶל סְסָמָח (Verse 18) are a most impressive warning against the *סְסָמָח* with which the depravity of Egypt threatens the moral life of the Children of Israel. The purpose of God's *חוּקָתָם* was precisely to protect them from this peril to their very survival. But the new generation showed its unfortunate lack of maturity by forgetting God's *חוּקָתָם* already when they reached Shittim. To stress this point, the Prophet in this instance (Verse 21) placed *חוּקָתָם* before *מְשֻׁטָּרִים* and in Verse 24 we are told *מְשֻׁטָּרִים* as distinct from Verse 13, where we learn that the *מְשֻׁטָּרִים* are the object of their rejection.

Verses 22-23. At the last moment, God lowered His hand that had been raised to strike Israel and, instead, prepared Israel's path to the Holy Land. However, God foresaw the time when this people would have to be dispersed among the nations. Already in the wilderness, God, in His *חוּכָה*, had pictured for this people the *gālūtah* as a school to purify them and to educate them for loyalty to Him. It was with this sworn warning of *חוּכָה* ringing in its ears that Israel first set foot on its sacred soil. Could anyone, then, possibly construe the fulfillment of the Divine promise of exile as a license for Israel to discard God's Law?

**24.** Because they did not follow My ordinances, they despised My statutes and profaned My Sabbaths, and their eyes were turned toward the idolatries of their fathers.

**25.** And so I, too, (then) gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances through which they would not gain life.

**26.** (Then) I brought impurity upon them through their offerings, since they offered to

24. וְעַנְתָּן מִשְׁפָטִי לְאֶצְבֹּשׁוּ וְחִקּוּתִי  
כְּמַאֲסָרֵנוּ וְאֶת־שְׁבָתוּתִי חִלְלוּ וְאֶת־  
גָּלוּלֵינוּ אֲבּוֹתֶם הַיּוּ עִזִּיהם:

25. וְנִמְצָא נִתְחַתִּי לָהֶם חֲקִים לֹא  
טוֹבִים וּמִשְׁפָטִים לֹא יְחִי בָּהֶם:

26. וְאָטַפְתָּא אֶתְכֶם בְּמִתְנֻשָּׂתִים  
בְּהַעֲבֵיר קֶלֶטֶר רְחֵם לְמַעַן

**Verse 24.** עַנְתָּן: In foreseeing these events God, in His חוכחה in the wilderness, had told the Children of Israel that they would be sent into exile.

**Verse 25.** But by breaking with the Law of God, the people of Israel brought upon themselves yet another bitter experience, ordained by God no less than their other sufferings. Thinking that they could dispense with God's laws, they impudently invented laws of their own to govern their lives. But before long, bitter experience taught them that man's true טוב can come only from the observance of God's laws and that true life can be attained only by keeping His laws. Without God, all חֲקִים are טובים and all laws are מִשְׁפָטִים לֹא חִי בָּהֶם.

The most eloquent commentary to this prophetic utterance is provided by the bleak wasteland that is world history, with its never-ending chain of wars and catastrophes. But all these experiences will ultimately lead the people of Israel, and eventually also the rest of mankind, back to God so that they might receive the true Law of life from His right hand. For this reason, God will suffer that His people will follow the example of the other nations and adopt their own laws. It is in this sense that these man-made laws, too, were "given" to them by God (see Isaiah 57,18: רְדֵכְךָ רְאִיתִי וְרִטְבָּאָרְךָ תְּמִגְדָּלָךְ). God makes Israel's self-chosen ways serve to promote Israel's healing. God gives them His guidance even when they have insisted on charting their own course, so that, some day, they may repent and seek the good and true life from the only Source where it may be found.

**Verse 26.** The Prophet cites one example illustrating the truth set forth in Verse 25. If the people of Israel will no longer accept God as the Lawgiver for their lives, what will be the consequences? In Exodus 13,12, God bids us הַעֲבֹרָה כָּל סְפִיר רָם לְהָ  
He promises us true טוב and life if we will consecrate

Moloch] everything that opens the womb—in order to make them desolate, so that they may know that I am הָנָה.

27. Therefore, son of mankind, speak to the house of Israel and say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Your fathers have further blasphemed Me by committing faithlessness against Me.

אַשְׁפָם לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַדְעُ אֲשֶׁר  
אַנְיִתָּהוּ:

לֹכֶן דָּבָר אַל-בֵּית וּשְׂרָאֵל בָּן־  
אָרוֹם וְאַמְرָת אֲלֵיכֶם כִּי אַפְּרִיד  
אַלְעִנִּי יְהוָה עַד זֹאת נְרָפֵג אָתָּה  
אֲבֹתֶיךָ בְּמַעַלְמָם בְּיַמָּעָל:

our children and devote our possessions to the fulfillment of His will. But the moment the people of Israel eliminate God from their lives they no longer fulfill the precept הַעֲבָרָה מִלְּפָרָה in its true meaning; instead, they become guilty of the abomination described as טָבְרָה לְפָלָל. We will learn in Verse 31 what becomes of their העברה if it is not performed as the command of God. In that case the people of Israel will be reduced to abject terror, bowing to the specter of an "almighty Fate" in the hope of obtaining some paltry crumbs of life and happiness by offering to that "Fate" their most precious possession (see Chapter 16, 20). God will then tolerate this gruesome טומאה, with which such "offerings" poison all of human life, to fall upon the people of Israel לְפָנֵן אֲשֶׁר הָנָה. The people of Israel will be forced to experience all the misery and desolation that must befall them if they give up the Law of God. Only this awareness, gained by first-hand experience, can bring them back to God's nearness: אֲשֶׁר אָנָה הָנָה. Only then will they know for all time that הָנָה is the sole Source of true life.

*Verse 27. לֹכֶן:* The foregoing is an answer to "Israel's elders" (Verse 3). But the Prophet in fact addresses it to the entire "House of Israel" (see Verse 1).

After the people of Israel had taken possession of the land of their destiny (Verse 28), their denial of their God-ordained mission—as God had already predicted in His תְּבוּנָה in the wilderness (Verses 24–25)—had become downright blasphemy (רָגֵג, Numbers 15,30), for the people of Israel became guilty of טָבְרָה against God because they robbed God of His most sacred possession, i.e., nature and the forces of nature (לְהַזְעֵק וּמְלֹאת), in order to worship them as idols. By thus deifying nature, which properly belongs to God and is subject to His rule, the people of Israel had added טָבְרָה, blasphemy, to the crime of רָגֵג, robbery, they had committed against God.

**28.** I brought them to the land [concerning] which I had lifted up My hand to give it to them, and there they saw every high hill and every leafy tree, and there they brought their meal offerings; there they presented the provoking symbols of their 'drawing near'; there they placed their expression of compliance and there they poured out their libations.

**29.** And I said to them: What kind of a "high place" is this to which you are the comers? (And

וְאֶבְיָם אֶל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר  
נִשְׂתַּחֲוִי אֶת־יְדֵי לִמְתָּה אֹתוֹתָה לְהַעֲלָה  
וַיַּרְאָוּ כָּל־גְּבֻעָה רְפָה וְכָל־עַזְבָּן  
עַלְתָּה וַיַּזְחַדְשָׂם אֶת־זְבָחִים  
וַיִּתְנַדְּשָׂם בְּעַם קָרְבָּנוֹם וַיִּשְׂמַח  
שָׁם בָּרִיחַ נִזְחֹמִים וַיִּסְפֹּכוּ שָׁם  
אֶת־דְּנָסְפִּיכֶם:

**וְאָמַר אֱלֹהִים מָה הַבָּטָה**

**Verse 28.** Instead of paying homage to God and to His Law and seeking His nearness, the people of Israel offered pagan sacrifices upon בָּטָה, a practice that only served to alienate them increasingly from God and His Law and led them to accept the demoralizing notions of nature worship (see Chapters 6 and 16,16 ff.). The word בָּטָה is repeated four times to call attention to the site where the people of Israel had lost the consecration of the physical aspects of their lives (וַיַּחֲמִם) and forfeited all the pure joys of life (סְכִימִים) because they no longer aspired to draw near (קָרְבָּנוֹת) to God and His Law, and their sacrifices were no longer symbolic expressions of allegiance to Him.

**Verse 29.** If we understand this thought correctly, the Prophet uses most succinct, picturesque language in this verse to expose the cult of the "high places." Note the play on words, בָּטָה and בָּטָה, see Chapter 16, Verse 16. בָּטָה denotes a physical elevation that serves to "elevate a given object" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1,25) and that one ascends with a view to achieving a given purpose (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 32,13). It is to this kind of "high place" that God sought to elevate the life of His people on earth (ירכְבָה), Deuteronomy 32,13). Israel was to find its joys in close proximity to Him, on the elevation of Zion. Zion was to be בָּרָם שְׂרָאֵל (Chapter 17, Verse 23; and Verse 40 of the present chapter). God had given His promise that if the people of Israel would elevate their lives on earth to Him upon Mount Zion, He would come to them and they would enjoy all the abundant blessings associated with His nearness: אֶבְרָא אַלְכַּר וּבְרָמָךְ (Exodus 20,21).

However, the people of Israel rejected this one true בָּטָה that could have brought them to the only "elevation" possible for them to attain. Instead, they believed they could "elevate" themselves by worshipping the forces of nature. בָּטָה is the Prophet's heartrending lament. What kind of בָּטָה

still) its name was called "high place" to this day.

**30.** Therefore say to the house of Israel: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: What? You defile yourselves upon the path your fathers trod, and you are faithless in that you go after their horrors;

**31.** And by lifting up your offerings, leading your children through the fire, defiling yourselves through your idolatries to this day—and I should let Myself be sought by you, house of Israel? As I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice, I will not let Myself be sought by you!

אשר אתם הֶבְאִים שָׁם וַיָּקֹרֵא  
שְׁקֹה בְּמֹה עַר הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:  
לֹכַן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּהּ  
אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הַכָּרְךָ אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם  
אתם נָטְמָאִים וְאַחֲרֵי שְׁקוֹצֵיכֶם  
אתם זָנוּנִים:

31. ובשעת מתחניכם בהעבירות  
בניכם באש אתם נטמאים לכל-  
גולוכם עדריהם ואני אדריש  
לכם בית וישראל חיראנו נאם  
אלני יהוה אם אדריש לכם:

is this to which you come (אשר אתם הֶבְאִים) and where you gather, but where God who should come with His promise **אבלך וכרכחך** cannot join you? All the warnings of the prophets had been to no avail. An anguished Ezekiel records the bitter reality: **וַיָּקֹרֵא שְׁמָה בְּמֹה**. The people of Israel had persisted in referring to high places that actually were His as if they were their own. And as long as the people of Israel clung to this notion, their possession of the Land of God was nothing but **מעילה**, a continuous act of blasphemy (Verse 27).

**Verses 30–31.** Could God be expected to bestow His nearness upon a nation which, instead of attaining life's true happiness by walking upon the path shown them by His own **ורקם** and **טשטטם**, had thrown away its purity by following the evil example of its forefathers, by leading a life so alien to the ways of God, a life of dehumanizing idolatry, a nation so degraded by its **בָּטָה**-cult that it had become a slave to an abomination such as the Moloch? (See Verse 26.) They would have to feel the "aloofness" of God described in the Chosha and the resultant sufferings before they would begin to yearn for His nearness once more.

32. And that which enters your mind will not come to pass, you that say: We will be like the nations, like the families of the lands, worshipping wood and stone.

33. As I live, is the pronouncement of My Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, I will remain King over you with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

34. I will lead you out from the nations and gather you from the lands in which you are dispersed, with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out.

35. I will bring you into the "wilderness of the nations," and

32. וְהַעֲלָה עַל־רוֹחֶכֶם הַזֶּה לֹא תִהְנֵה אֲשֶׁר | אַתֶּם אַמְرִים נְהִרְתֶּן בְּנוּם בְּמִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָרֶצֶת לְשֻׁרְתָּן עַז וְאָבוֹן:

33. חִרְאָנוּ נָאָם אַדְנִי לְוַה אֱמֶלֶא בָּנֶר חִזְקָה וּבָנָרְעַת נְטוּיוֹה וּבְחִמָּה שְׁפּוּכוֹת אַמְלוֹךְ עַלְיכֶם:

34. וְהַזְּאוֹתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הַעֲפִים וּבְכָצְעִי אֶתְכֶם קְדוּמָה אֶרְצֶת אֲשֶׁר נְפֹצַתְם בְּסֶם בָּנֶר חִזְקָה וּבָנָרְעַת נְטוּיוֹה וּבְחִמָּה שְׁפּוּכוֹת:

35. וְהַבָּאָתִי אֶתְכֶם אַל־מִרְבֵּר

*Verse 32.* But nothing would be more criminal, indeed more insane, than that the people of Israel should respond to God's aloofness by completely renouncing their God-ordained calling as *ישראל*. God's purpose in exiling His people is to train them to become worthy of His nearness again. And nothing can prevent God's plans from becoming reality.

*Verse 33.* אֲתָה: God is present also in the *galuth*. His "mighty hand and outstretched arm," which were revealed to them in Egypt in His almighty power over nature and history when He chose the people of Israel to serve as the bearers of His will—these will guide them also in *galuth* upon the path He has charted for them. Even when He pours out His wrath upon them, God is still the King of Israel, His people.

*Verse 34.* Israel's eventual ingathering from dispersion has been the explicitly declared objective of God's Providence all along. הַזְּאוֹת מִצְרָיָם so that its dispersion also implies the promise of its future ingathering. This is the work of the hand of God, even when He pours out His wrath upon His people.

*Verses 35–36.* In order to achieve this purpose, Israel had to be sent out on a new march through the wilderness; this time its wanderings were to be through the "wilderness of the nations." The wanderings of the Children of

there I will sit in judgment on you, face to face.

**36.** As I sat in judgment on your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Mitzrayim, so will I sit in judgment on you, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**37.** I will cause you to pass beneath the rod and I will bring you into the bond of the tradition of the covenant.

העמים ונשפטתִי אֶתְכֶם שָׁם פָנֵים אַלְפָנִים:

36. בְּאֹשֶׁר נִשְׁפְּטוּתִי אֹתֶךָ אֲבֹתֵיכֶם בְּמִרְבֵּן אֶרְץ מִצְרָיִם בֶּן אֲשֶׁפֶת אֶתְכֶם נָאָם אֶלְגִּי יְהוָה:

37. וְהַעֲבֹרְתִּי אֶתְכֶם תְּחַת הַשְּׁבָט וְהַכָּאָתִי אֶתְכֶם בְּמִלְּרַת הַבְּרִית:

Israel through the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt had been intended to impress upon them, over and over again, that loyal, unconditional submission to the will of God was their only guarantee of survival. So now, too, Israel was to be cast out from its land, by the disciplining hand of God, into the "wilderness of the nations." Bereft of all the material resources usually considered necessary for physical survival, stripped of all the physical and political power that the other nations possessed, Israel was to experience the miraculous life-giving power of God's Torah. If the people of Israel were ever to discard the Law, they would be irretrievably doomed to death even as the Children of Israel would have been lost if they had broken with God during their wanderings through the wilderness. In this "either-or" ultimatum with which God's lofty precepts confront them, He reveals Himself to the people of Israel "face to face" even in their march through this new wilderness.

*Verse 37.* They pass in review, single file, beneath the staff of God, their Shepherd. That is how God trains His people to become His "holy flock" (Chapter 34, Verse 31; Chapter 36, Verse 38). This is in the spirit of the law concerning מִשְׁרָה בְּהֵמָה (Leviticus 27,32).

מִשְׁרָה may be an abbreviated form of טָרָה, "to bind," "to shackle," or (according to Rashi) it may be derived from טָרָר, the Rabbinic term for "transmitting" or "handing down." Thus, מִשְׁרָה denotes "tradition." In either meaning, this term would refer to the training of the Jewish nation so that it may accept the covenant that was handed down to them, and the complete, unconditional acceptance of the Law of God, both Written and Oral, which, at first, appears to the nation as a shackling restraint on their freedom but which, in fact, is a means toward achieving the ultimate purpose of Israel's exile.

**38.** And I will eliminate from among you the rebels and those that sin against Me, for I will lead them out from the land that is to serve them as a temporary sojourn, but no one will come to the soil of Israel, and you will know that I am 'ה'.

**39.** But as for you, house of Israel, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Go, each of you, serve every one his own idolatries and thereafter—if you do not listen to Me, do not continue to profane My holy Name with your gifts and your idolatries.

38. וְבָרֹעַתִּי מֵבָמָם הַמְּרֻבִּים  
וְהַפּוֹשָׁעים בְּיַמְּרִץ מִנּוֹרִיחַ  
אוֹצִיא אֶתְכֶם וְאֶל-אַרְקַת יִשְׂרָאֵל:  
לَا יָבֹא וְרַעֲתָם כִּי-אַנִּי יְהוָה:

39. וְאַתֶּם בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי-אָמַרְתִּי  
אָדָןִי יְהוָה אֱישׁ גָּלוּיּוֹ לְכָךְ עַבְרֹנוֹ  
וְאַחֲרָ אַסְ-אַינְכֶם שְׁמָעוּם אַלְגַּיְלָן  
וְאַתֶּה-שָׁם קָרְשִׁי לֹא תְּחַלְּוּ-עַזְרָה  
בְּמִתְּנִונְתֵיכֶם וּבְגָלוּלֵיכֶם:

*Verse 38.* Of course, the rebels who thought they could avoid the Shepherd's staff that was meant to guide them back to the covenant of God and to His nearness would meet an even harsher fate. These were the sinners who totally misunderstood the purpose of the *galuth*. Either they had forgotten that any host country was only אָרֶץ מִנוֹרִיחַ, intended as a temporary domicile until the ultimate day of Israel's ingathering; they therefore thought that the "Jewish problem" could be solved if the Jews were to merge completely with the nations in whose midst they live. Or they thought they could leave the inhospitable countries which had treated them as גָּרִים and which could therefore never be their home, and return to their homeland, to the soil of Israel, without first having resolved to return also (גַּטְסוֹת הַבָּרִיחַ) to God and to His Law. These individuals, like their erring ancestors before them, would perish in the wilderness, לא יָרָא (Numbers 14,23). (וְכֹל מְנַצֵּחַ לֹא יָבוֹא) (our Verse): None of them will accomplish their misguided aim as they are counter to the Will of God.

*Verse 39.* The "House of Israel" now knows what is in store for them (Verse 31). Go on worshipping your idols, the Prophet tells them, and then.... Ezekiel does not have to spell it out. They surely know what will happen to them. But if they refuse to heed God's warning, let them at least abandon that perverted mixture of Jewish and heathen ideology which has allowed them to tolerate the cult of Moloch side by side with the worship of the One God on the soil of God's holy place and thus to desecrate His holy Name in the most revolting manner (Leviticus 20,3).

40. For on the mountain of My Sanctuary, on the mountain of the height of Israel, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, there the entire house of Israel, united in the land, will serve Me: there I will receive them with favor, and there I will seek your uplifted donations and the first of your gifts from all your sacred things.

41. With the expression of compliance I will take pleasure in you when I will bring you out from among the nations and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, and thus will I be sanctified through you in the sight of the nations.

40. כי בהר קדשיך בהר הארץ מרים  
ישראל נאש ארכני ירוה שם  
יעברני כל בות ישראל כללה  
בארץ שם ארצם ושם ארכוש  
את תרומותיכם ואת תרומותיכם  
משאותיכם בכל קדשיכם:

41. ברית ניחוח הארץ אתכם  
ביהוצאי אתכם מולדת עמים  
וקבצתי אתכם מולדת הארץ אשדר  
נספחים בתם ונקיים בכם לעניין  
הנויים:

*Verse 40.* The Prophet has no fears for the fate of God's sacred cause. Surely the mountain of God's holy place will eventually become also the "mountain" of Israel's spiritual elevation, on which Israel will find its only true fulfillment. When this becomes reality, all the *נַמֵּה* (see Verses 28–29) will vanish forever, and then the entire people of Israel will be reunited on the soil of its homeland. But first, Zion must become *ארץ ישראל* and the entire nation of Israel must rally around the towering Sanctuary that belongs to them all (*כליה טווך*). When any notion of *כטה* will have disappeared, the one true spiritual "elevation," the Sanctuary, will again be restored to its original importance. Then the Sanctuary will once again be the site where the union of God and Israel will take place. Once again, from this site God will look down approvingly upon His people and will yearn once more, as it were, for Israel's uplifted donations and offerings of first fruits because He will then regard these offerings, as in the past, as symbolic expressions of Israel's sacred vow to seek His nearness in its actions and in its course through history.

*Verse 41.* This is the purpose of the whole history of Israel in exile: that God may once more look approvingly upon their "expressions of compliance" with His will and His Law. The ideals symbolized by the *קרבן* are to become living realities. These ideals alone, and their implementation by Israel, will

42. And you will know that I am God when I shall bring you to the soil of Israel, into the land concerning which I lifted up My hand to give it to your fathers.

43. And when, there, you will recall your ways and all your deeds by which you have defiled yourselves, you will loathe yourselves for all your evils which you have committed.

44. You will know that I am ה since I dealt with you for the sake of My Name, not according to your wicked ways and corrupt deeds, house of Israel, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

42. וַיַּרְעַתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי וְהִוֵּה בַּהֲבִיאִי  
אַתֶּם אֶל־אֶרְכָת יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־  
הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־זָרִי לְתַתְּ  
אֹתָה לְאָבוֹתֶיכֶם:

43. וְזָכְרַתֶּם־שֶׁם אֶת־דָּרְכֵיכֶם  
וְאֵת כָּל־עֲלִילוֹתֶיכֶם אֲשֶׁר  
גִּטְמָאַתֶּם בָּם וַיַּקְרְטוּתֶם בְּפָנֵיכֶם  
בְּכָל־רְעוֹתֶיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם:

44. וַיַּרְעַתֶּם כִּי־אֲנִי וְהִוֵּה בַּעֲשֹׂתִי  
אַתֶּם לְמַעַן שְׁמִי לֹא כְּרוּכִים  
הַרְשָׁעָם וְכָל־עֲלִילוֹתֶיכֶם הַגְּשֻׁחוֹת  
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל נָאֵם אֲדֹנֵי יְהוָה: פ

prepare the ground for the recognition of God also by the other nations. But all this requires that Israel submit unconditionally to the Word of God (קדושה).

*Verse 42.* Not only Israel's ingathering but also the fact that הארץ ישראל once again became ארם ישראל (see our note on Chapter 7, Verse 2) will then demonstrate the wondrous mercy in which God, in His quality of ה, educates His people for His purposes.

*Verses 43–44.* The more Israel will be filled with loathing (קוט Chapter 6, Verse 9) when it recalls the extent of its former decadence, the more it will become aware that it owes its survival and rebirth solely to Divine Providence, which never desired Israel's destruction but only sought to train Israel so that it would truly become the people of God, thereby elevating also the rest of mankind to the same lofty spiritual level.

**בְּנַשׁוּתֵי אַתֶּם לְפָנֵן שְׁמִי:** The history of the people of Israel reveals God as the God of עַמּוֹת, Who labors without cease upon the perfection of His Creation—אשר בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים לְעַמּוֹת (Genesis 2.3)—not only in nature but also in the history of mankind. He never stops the work He began in Egypt: שָׁמָר לְפָנֵן שְׁמִי (Verse 9).

**Chap. 21.** 1. The word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, turn your face toward the south; proclaim (the word of God) toward the south and speak the prophetic word to the woodland of the south.

3. And speak to the forest of the south: Hear the word of God; thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will kindle a fire in you and it will consume every vigorous tree and every barren tree within you, the flame of flames will not be extinguished, and all the faces from the south to the north will be seared by it.

כ א וְנָאָתֵה רַבְרִיּוֹתֶה אֱלֹהִים לְאָמֶר:

ב בְּנֵרָם שָׁים פְּנֵיךְ בְּרֵךְ תִּפְנֶה וְהַפְּנֵפְלָרִים וְהַגְּבָא אֲלִיּוֹד הַשְׂדָה נָגֵב:

ג וְאָמַרְתָּ לְיִעָר הַנָּגֵב שָׁמָעַ רַבְרִי יְהוָה כָּלְמַצְיָה־בָּעַד אָשׁוֹבָא לְאַכְלָה בָּעַד כָּל־עַזְלָחָן וּכְלִיעָזָן יְבָשׁ לְאַתְכָה לְהַבְתָּ שְׁלָהָבָת וּנְצָרְבָּבָה כָּל־פְּנִים מִנָּגֵב צְפֹונָה:

**Chapter 21.** The moment at which God, "with fury poured out" (Chapter 20, Verse 33), will assert His rights as the Ruler of Israel is drawing near. The vision of events to come appears with ever-growing clarity before the Prophet's eye; he portrays the future in horrifying terms and his soul is shaken to its very depths with indescribable anguish. The language of this chapter is comparable to that of Chapter 15 which, as we have already seen, is similar in substance to Chapter 14 which, in turn, parallels the contents of Chapter 20.

**Verses 2–4.** The Prophet is bidden to look toward the south, where his homeland lies. The "dewdrops" (*רַקְבָּה*, "to drip," see Michah 2,6) of his message from God are destined for the south. Ezekiel is commanded to proclaim the following prophecy with regard to the magnificent woodlands of that region: The fire of God's wrath will rage through the woodlands, consuming all the trees, the young and vigorous along with the old and withered. Efforts to put out the blaze will be in vain, for that would require the extinction of that "Flame of Flames," the Source that feeds the fire. (Hence, the expression *לְהַבְתָּ* would be similar to that of *קָרְשָׁ קְדֻשָּׁם*, *עַבְרִים בְּרִים*. According to the Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 29, 37, these are not to be interpreted as simple superlatives but, as in *קְדֻשָּׁ קְדֻשָּׁם*, as sanctuaries from which other sanctuaries derive their sanctity.) The flames are fed by the Divine spark; that is why they

**4.** And all flesh shall witness that it is I, God, Who kindled it; it will not be extinguished.

**5.** Then I said: O my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, they say of me, 'But he is only speaking in parables.'

**6.** Then the word of God came to me:

**7.** Son of mankind, turn your face toward Yerushalayim, and proclaim the word of God over sanctuaries and the prophetic word concerning the soil of Israel.

**8.** Say to Israel's soil: Thus has God spoken: Behold, I am turning

**4.** וְרָאֹו בֶּלְכָשֵׁר כִּי אֲנִי יְהֹוָה  
בְּעַרְתִּיחָ לְאַתְכָּבָה:

**5.** וְאֹמֵר אֱלֹהָ אָרְגֵן יְהֹוָה בְּמִזְבֵּחַ  
אָמְרִים לֵי הַלֵּא קְמַשֵּׁל מְשֻׁלִּים  
הָוֹא: פ

**6.** וַיְהִי רַבְרִיוֹתָה אֶלְיָהוּ לְאֹמֵר:

**7.** בְּרוּאָלָם שִׁים פָּנֵיכָ אֶל-יְהוּדָה  
וְהַטְּפָ אֶל-מִקְרָשִׁים וְהַגְּבָא אֶל-  
אַרְכָּת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

**8.** וְאֹמְרָתָ לְאַרְכָּת יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּהּ

will spread from the south to the north and nothing will be able to stop them. They have consumed the young and vigorous trees; should they then spare those that are already old and withered? (Malbim). That is why the flames sear (שרף, related to שֶׁרֶב; see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 13,23) the faces of the unfortunate ones who would attempt to put them out.—יאת, "to kindle."

*Verse 5.* At this point the Prophet interrupts the **מַלֵּל** of God's words. He says he has used his **מַלֵּל** long enough in his efforts to refute those of his adversaries. The results have not been encouraging. The vague character of the **מַלֵּל** only served to allay the fears of those who still had respect for the Word of God: they felt that the danger could not be so close at hand after all if a **מַלֵּל** was still needed to describe it (Chapter 12, Verse 27).

*Verses 6–7.* And so the **מַלֵּל** is replaced by an unambiguous message from God. It translates the vague language of the **מַלֵּל** into a searing description of the horrors experienced at first hand. The Prophet's attention is centered on Jerusalem; the life-giving dewdrops of his message from God fall upon the desecrated chambers of the Sanctuary. (For an explanation of the plural form **מִקְרָשִׁים**, see Chapter 7, Verse 24). The prophecy that now follows concerns the soil of the land of Israel.

*Verses 8–10.* The sword of God has been drawn from its sheath and sweeps across the land of Israel, destroying everything in its path. It cuts down the righteous along with the wicked. It does not spare the righteous. In fact, it begins with the youthful trees that could have prevented the conflagration

against you; I will draw My sword from its sheath and will annihilate from your midst the righteous and the wicked.

9. Since I will annihilate from your midst the righteous and the wicked, My sword will go forth from its sheath against all flesh from the south to the north,

10. And all flesh will know that I, God, have drawn My sword from its sheath; it shall not return any more.

11. But you, son of mankind, sigh, with a breaking of the loins and with bitter grief sigh before their eyes.

12. And it shall be when they say to you: 'Why do you sigh?'

אָמַר יְהוָה הָנָנוּ אֶלְיךָ וְהֹצַאֲתִי  
חֲרֵבִי מִפְּטָעָה וְהַכְּרַתִּי טַפְּךָ  
צְלִיקִים וּרְשָׁעִים:

9. וְנִעַן אֲשֶׁר־הַכְּרַתִּי מִפְּךָ צְלִיקָה  
וּרְשָׁעָה לְכוֹ תַּצָּא חֲרֵבִי מִפְּטָעָה  
אַל־כְּלַבְשָׂר מִגְּנָב אַפְּוֹן:

10. וַיַּדְרֹעַ קָלְבָשָׂר בַּי אֲנִי יְהוָה  
הֹצַאֲתִי חֲרֵבִי מִפְּטָעָה לֹא תִשְׁׁבוּ  
עֹור: ס

11. וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי־אָנָם הָנָגָן  
בְּשָׁבְרוֹן סְתָנוֹם. וּבְקִרְיוֹת  
תִּאָנַח לְעֵינֵיכֶם:

12. וְהִנֵּה כִּירְאָמְרוּ אֶלְיךָ עַל־

but had failed to do so (see Chapter 9, Verses 4 ff.) and then it continues to rage unabated. As it advances toward the north it encounters only withered branches. Why should it spare these? God's sword will not return to its sheath until its work is done.

*Verses 11–12. אהָת:* The Prophet heaves a deep sigh, "arising from the very soul of one whose spirit has been deeply wounded" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 2,23). His strength has been broken and his heart is torn with anguish because the sword has not spared even the Sanctuary of God. But the people are still unaware of the impending catastrophe—and even if they would have some foreboding of what is to come, would any of them understand the Prophet's anguish? Would they, too, heave the agonized sigh hinting that at least half their strength has been broken? (אנָה שָׁבְרָה חַזִּי נָטוּשׁ לְאָדָם – כתובות טב.). As things are, they are still captives of their illusions; they think their hands are strong enough to deal with any disaster. But all this will change when the scales will fall from their eyes and they will recognize, alas! too late, that, by betraying their Sanctuary, they had discarded the very strength which alone could have saved them and assured them lasting happiness. When they will hear the account of the destruction of God's Sanctuary, a sigh will rise from deep within their remorseful hearts, draining away the last of their

that you shall say: Because of the news. When it comes, every heart will melt, all hands will go limp and every spirit will be faint, and all knees will dissolve [like] water; behold, it comes; it has become reality, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

**13.** And the word of God came to me:

**14.** Son of mankind, speak your prophetic word and say: Thus has God spoken: Say: The sword, the sword, it is sharpened and polished smooth;

**15.** It is sharpened so that it may slay well; it is polished so that it may send out flashes of lightning—or should we rejoice that it will reject the trunk of My son from among all the trees?

פֶּה אַתָּה נֹאנְחֵךְ וְאִמְרָתְךָ אֵלֶּה  
שְׁמוּעָה כִּי־בָּאָה וְנִקְםָס כָּל־לְבָבֶךָ  
וְרָפוֹכָלִינְדִּים וְכִבְתָּהָכָלִידִות  
וְכָל־בְּרָכִים תַּלְקַנָּה פְּיוֹם הַנֶּה  
בָּאָה וְנִהְיָתָה נָאָם אֲלֹנִי יְהוָה:

ט. וַיֹּהֵי רַבְּרִיאַלְוָה אֶלְיוֹ לְאמֹר:

ט. קָנָדָרִים הַגְּבָאָה וְאִמְרָתְךָ בָּה  
אָמַר אֲלֹנִי אָמַר חָרְבָּה חָרְבָּה  
וְגַסְּמָרָתָה:

ט. לְמַעַן טְבַח טְבַחַרְוָתָה לְמַעַן  
בְּיִהְיָה בָּרָק מְרָטָה אוֹ גַּשְ׀ישָׁ  
שְׁבָט בְּנֵי מָאָסָת כָּל־עַזָּן:

strength. Their hands will drop helplessly at their sides and their knees will buckle. But the Prophet has already perceived the events that are about to happen, **ונחיה** (Verse 12). As far as he is concerned, the dire prophecy has already materialized and the Sanctuary is already in ruins. Should his heart, then, not break with anguish that things should have come to this pass? But his own sigh is as nothing compared to the grief with which, as he himself tells us, his people, filled with remorse, will mourn the loss of their Sanctuary. For this reason these words have been turned into life-giving dewdrops, **הַסְּפָרָה** (Verse 7), which will fall upon the ruins of the House of God and whose wondrous power will one day restore these ruins to life.

**Verses 14–15.** How is it that the people cannot see the sword, sharpened for the massacre? Have they not already felt its blows twice before in their history: **חרב חָרְבָּה** in the days of Jehoiakim and Jeconiah? **או גַּשְ׀ישָׁה**: Or would there be any reason at all for us to hope, along with the people, that this sword, which is cutting down every tree, far and wide (Verse 3), will spare the “trunk” that is the nation of God? **חרדר**, “to be sharp;” **טְרַטֵּשׁ**, “to polish,” “to sharpen.”

16. He had given it to be polished smooth so that he may take it in his hand. The sword is sharpened; it is polished smooth, to be placed into the slayer's hand.

17. Lament and wail, son of mankind, that it is destined to be used against My people, against all the princes of Israel; they are delivered up to the sword, together with My people, therefore strike your thigh (in lamentation).

18. Is this a test? (But) what if there will not be any trunk left to be rejected, according to the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice?

19. But you, son of mankind, speak your prophetic word and strike your hands together; let the sword be doubled for a third time;

וַיִּתְןֵן אֹתָהּ לְמֶרְטָה לְתַפְשֵׁשׁ  
בְּכָפָר הַיְהוּנָתָרָה חֲרֵב וּוְעֵιָה  
מֶרְטָה לְתַת אֹתָהּ בְּגִידְהָוָבָן:

17. וְעַק וְהַיְלֵל בְּנוֹאָרָם כִּי־הִיא  
הַיְתָה בְּעַפְויִ הִיא בְּכָל־גִּנְשִׂיאִ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל סְנוּבִי אֶל־חֲרֵב הַיְיָ אַתָּה  
עַפְויִ לְכֹן קְפָק אֶל־יִרְחָה:

18. כִּי בְּחִן וּמָה אִסְּגָּס־שְׁבָט  
מְאַסֵּת לְאִיהָנוֹ נָאָם אַרְגְּנִיוֹנוֹהָ פָּ

19. וְאֹתָהּ בְּנוֹאָרָם הַגָּבָא וְהַךְ בָּקָעַ  
אֶל־בָּקָע וְתַכְפֵּל חֲרֵב שְׁלִישָׁתָה

*Verses 16–17.* Was it not God who caused the sword to flash? Was it not the hand of God that gave the sword to Nebuchadnezzar? Was it not God Himself Who placed it into the hand of the murderer to use against the nation of God? *טנ.* “to cast off,” “to abandon.” *פָּס*, see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 24,10.

*Verse 18.* *כִּי בְּחִן*: Or is there even the slightest possibility that the sword has been unsheathed only to put the people to the test (*גָּנָב*) and that they might be spared at the last minute? *הַזָּה*: But what would they say if God were to convince them that no tree trunk will be considered too insignificant to be cut down as His sword rages through the forest? If only *were still שָׁבֵשׁ* *בְּנֵי שָׁבֵשׁ* (Verse 15)! But God no longer perceives it as His trunk. Therefore, let it fall to the sword!

*Verse 19.* Now the sword sweeps over them for the third time. (*שְׁלִישָׁתָה* as in I Samuel 3,8). It is the sword of those already slain, the sword whose victims are doomed even before it has cut them down. Even Israel's exalted king (see Verse 30) is only an “exalted corpse.” Hearing all this, how can

it is a sword of the slain; a sword of the great one that was slain, [a sword] that penetrates (their inmost chambers).

**20.** So that (every) heart may melt away and those that stumble may multiply in all their gates, have I allowed slaughter by the sword; woe! it was created that it should flash; though it is sheathed, it is polished smooth for the slaughter.

**21.** Gather together toward the right; turn toward the left—wherever your bearings are set.

**22.** And I, too, will strike My hands together and set My anger to rest; I, God, have spoken!

**23.** And the word of God came to me:

**24.** As for you, son of mankind, prepare yourself two paths for the sword of the king of Babylon to

חרב חללים היא חרב חלל הנדרות  
החררת להם:

20. לְמַעַן | לִמְוֹג לֵב וּתְרֵבָה  
המִכְשָׁלִים עַל כָּל־שְׁעָרֵיכֶם נִתְחַי  
אֲבִתְתִּיחַרְב אָח עֲשֹׂוֹת לְבָקָק  
מַעַטָּה לְטַבָּח:

21. הַתְּאַחֲרֵי הַיּוֹמָנִי הַשְׁוִימִי  
הַשְׁמִילִי אֲנָה פָּגַע מִעָרֹות:

22. וְגַסְדָּאַנְי אֲכָה כְּפֵי אַלְכָבֵד  
וּבְגַחְתִּיךְמַתִּיא אֲנָי וְהַרְבָּתִים:

23. וְיַעֲשֵׂי רְבָרִיהָנָה אַלְיָ לְאָמָר:

24. וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי־אָתָם שָׁוְמַלְעָה |  
שְׁנִים דָּרְכִים לְבוֹא חֶרְבָּ מְלָךְ-

they still think they might be spared? חזרות: the sword cuts its way into the innermost chambers; no one is spared. (רַקְעָר, "the inner chamber;" וּ, "to surround," "to encircle").

*Verse 20.* מַוג, "to melt away." אֲכָתָח חַרְב (see Rashi) may have the same meaning as סְמֻתָה לְסִמְתָה, similar to סְמֻתָה (Verse 33), is probably a combination of טְרֵס and עַסְתָה "to be covered," "to be veiled." Since this is God's own sword, it can strike its swift lightning blows even if it is still veiled from the eye of the unthinking observer.

*Verses 21–22.* No matter in which direction the sword turns first, to the right or to the left, it must follow the course set for it by God. But God laments the blood-soaked path of His sword. Mankind has not made possible for Him other means of retribution. —see Chapter 5, Verse 13.

*Verses 24–25.* The Prophet has a clear vision of the forthcoming turn of events. He sketches in advance the path which the sword of the Babylonian ruler will follow in accordance with God's Will. He maps out two distinct

come; both shall come forth from one land, and prepare a place; at the head of the way to the city shall you prepare it.

25. Prepare the path for the sword to come to Rabbah of the sons of Ammon, and to Judah against fortified Yerushalayim.

26. For the king of Babylon stands at the crossroads, at the head of the two paths, in order to perform divination: he shakes the arrows, consults the *teraphim* and examines the liver.

27. To the right the sign pointed to Yerushalayim, to set up battering rams, to open [their] mouth

בְּבֵל מִארֶץ אַחֲרֵי נִצְעָז שְׁנִירָה  
וְנִיר בְּרָא בְּרָא שְׂרָדָעֵיר בְּרָא:

25. הַרְחֵךְ תְּשִׁים לְכֹוא חֶרֶב  
אֶת רֶבֶת בְּגַרְעֵמָן וְאֶת יְהוָה  
בֵּירוּשָׁלָם בְּצֹוָה:

26. כִּי־עָמָדוּ מֶלֶךְ־בְּבֵל אֶל־אָם  
הַרְחֵךְ בְּרָא שְׁנֵי הַרְכָּבִים  
לְקָסְפָּקָסָם קָלְקָל בְּחָזִים שְׁאָל  
בְּתְּרָפִים רְאָה בְּכָרָה:

27. בִּימְינוֹ תָּנוּה | תְּקָסָם יְרוּשָׁלָם  
לְשֻׁום כְּרָיִם לְפָתָח פָּה בְּרָצָח

routes, both of which originate in the same land, not diverging until they reach a certain place, a parting of the ways (Verse 26). From there, one path will turn to the right and another to the left. The Prophet is commanded to call special attention to this place, (צ' as in Deuteronomy 23,13; בְּרָא literally, "to emerge," "to come into view;" see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1,1). From this place one path led to the capital of the Ammonites; the other, to Jerusalem.

*Verse 26.* The king of Babylonia is described as standing at the crossroads, consulting his טוממים though the path of his sword has already been set by a higher Authority (Verse 21). "He stationed himself at the crossroads לְקָסָם and consulted his omens in three ways: by shaking arrows to and fro, by making inquiry of the טומם [by killing a rooster] and examining its liver." Accordingly, טומם would seem to denote "divination" in general, an art practiced in many different ways in the ancient world. Since the term encompasses this art as one single concept, the singular form is used in Verse 27 to describe the results of the consultation (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 18,9).

לְקָלָל, from קָלָל, "to be light;" hence also "to shake," "to jar" or "to shock" (see Jeremiah 4,24). טומם apparently were idols that were used as oracles (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 31,19).

*Verse 27.* No matter what method he used for finding the answer, בִּימְנוֹ, the טומם was always at his right, pointing to Jerusalem. And so he decided to mount his campaign against Jerusalem (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy

during the slaughter, in order to raise the clamorous cry of battle, to set up the battering rams against the gates, to raise ramparts, to build siege towers.

28. But in their eyes it will be as a false divination, for have not oaths upon oaths been pledged to them? But this will bring their guilt to mind all the more, so that they may be seized.

29. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in His execution of justice: Because you yourselves have brought your own guilt to mind in that, as a result, your iniquities were revealed and

לְהָרִים קֹול בַּתְּרוּעָה לְשׁוֹם בְּרִים  
עַל-שַׁעֲרִים לְשִׁפְךָ סָלֵךְ לְבִנּוֹת  
רַיָּק:

28. וְהִנֵּה לְהָם כְּקָסָס-שְׂוָא  
בְּעִינֵיכֶם שְׁבֻעָה שְׁבֻעָה לְהָם  
וְהוּא-מָזְכִיר עָזָן לְהַתְּפַשֵּׁה: פ

29. לְכָן כִּי-אָמַר אֶלְנִי יְהוָה  
יְעַן הַוּכָבִים עָנְגָבִים בְּהַגְלוּת  
פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם לְהַרְאֹת חֲטֹאתֵיכֶם

וְתִירָה

18,9). Given the sequence of the military methods indicated by the סִמּוֹן for the attack on Jerusalem, the Babylonians had every reason to expect a quick and easy victory. No sooner were the battering rams set up against the city than the massacre of the defeated populace began—all this even before the fear-inspiring battle cries could be sounded in their full strength. And the battering rams were at the gates of the city even before ramparts and siegeworks had been set up.

The סִמּוֹן had been correct: God had abandoned Jerusalem to the triumphant enemy even if the latter thought that he was merely following the advice of his נָבָप.

*Verses 28–29.* But now for a note of irony. Nebuchadnezzar had put his trust in the נָבָב that promised him victory, but when the news of the impending siege reached Jerusalem, no one there seemed to believe in the סִמּוֹן. The people of Jerusalem regarded all divination (סִמּוֹן, infinitive) as false and refused to be intimidated. Did they not have a guarantee from God Himself (see Habakkuk 3,9: שְׁבֻעָה מְתוּא אָמָר סְלה) that Jerusalem would never fall? Why, then, should they allow mere סִמּוֹן to frighten them? But strangely enough, these were the same people who, until that time, had resorted to נָבָב of their own to refute the Divine message brought by the Prophet (see Chapter 13). Their own past cannot be denied so easily. The more they think they can

your transgressions became visible in all your deeds—because you have made yourselves remembered, therefore you will now be seized by (His) hand.

**30.** And [as for] you, slain wicked one, you prince of Israel, whose day of destiny has come at the time of ultimate iniquity.

**31.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: The turban has been taken off; now let the crown be removed also! If not this, then not the other (either). Depravity has been raised on high and the exalted abased.

**32.** More and more and more will I destroy them; this, too, shall

בְּכָל עֲלִילוֹתֵיכֶם יִעַן הַזְּכָרֶב  
בְּכָפֶת תְּתַפְּשׁוּ פ

.<sup>30</sup> וְאַתָּה חַלְלֶךָ שָׁעַנְשִׁיאוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
אֲשֶׁר־בָּא יוֹמָו בָּעֵת עָזָן קָצָן:

.<sup>31</sup> כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹנִי יְהוָה הָסִיר  
הַמְּצֻנָּת וְהַרְיִם הַעֲטָרָה זָאת  
לְאַדְזָאת הַשְּׁפֵלָה תְּגַבֵּה וְתְגַבֵּה  
הַשְּׁפִילָה:

.<sup>32</sup> עָזָה עָזָה עָזָה אֲשִׁימָה גָּם

disregard the **קָסְטִים** of the Babylonians, clinging to their trust in the vow God made to them, the more their own past will come back to haunt them, bearing witness against them and handing them over to the enemy. Notwithstanding all the Prophet's warnings, they had looked to **קָסְטִים** for guidance; now let them believe in the **בָּזָבָז** of the Babylonians.

*Verse 30.* And now follows a strong rebuke to Zedekiah, the man who, as נֶשֶׁר אֶשְׁר־אָל, should have been the one best qualified to show his people the path that leads to God and thus to their own salvation. The Prophet calls him a חַלְלֶךָ (see Verse 19). His moment of truth has come; there is a time when the measure of sin becomes full and reaches its end result (**עַן קָצָן**).

*Verses 31–32.* הָסִיר and all the verbs that follow are in the infinitive. The language is menacing and brutal. God will seize the crown from the king's head because the high priest has been stripped of his sacred turban (בְּזַקְנָתָה בְּרָאשָׁן). The crown of kingship can exercise authority only as long as the sacred turban is secure upon the head of the high priest, symbolizing the lofty standards set by God's Sanctuary. The authority of the crown should serve the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary (see Zechariah, Chapters 3–4, 6 and 9–15). But once madness had elevated vulgarity and degraded sanctity, and the high priest's crown had been trampled

not remain until the coming of the one who is entitled to it; to him shall I give it.

**33.** And as for you, son of mankind, speak your prophetic word and say: Thus has my Lord, God, Who reveals Himself in justice, spoken to the sons of Ammon and concerning their slander. Say: The sword, the sword, it remains unsheathed; it is polished smooth for slaughter, sufficient (to continue) sending out its flashes of lightning.

**34.** Since you fancied nothingness for yourself and divined falsehood for yourself, you are now to be placed with the necks of the slain evildoers whose day of destiny has come at the time of their ultimate iniquity.

**35.** (Do you think) it will return

זאת לא היה ערדֶבָא אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ  
המשפט וגנתתו: ט

33. וְאַתָּה בָּרוּאֵלִים הַגָּבָא וְאָמְרָתָ  
כֹּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ  
עַמּוֹן וְאֶל־חֲרָפָתָם וְאָמְרָתָ תְּרֵבָ  
תְּרֵבָ פָּטוּחָה לְפַבְּחַקְרָוּתָה לְהַקְרֵיל  
לְמַעַן בָּרָק:

34. בְּחוּזָה לְךָ שְׂוָא בְּקַסְפָּדָלָךְ  
כִּיּוֹב לְתַת אָוָתָךְ אֶל־צָנָאוּי חַלְלֵי  
רְשָׁעִים אֲשֶׁר־בָּא יְוָמָם בְּעֵת עָזָן  
קְצָן:

**35. הַשְׁבָּא אֶל־תַּעֲנֵה בְּמָקוֹם**

underfoot, the crown of kingship also crumbled in the dust. **זאת לא היה ערדֶבָא:** Where the priesthood is no longer respected, kingship has lost its right to exist.

God smashes the crown (**טַע**, as in Isaiah 24,2, "to twist," "to destroy") with three mighty blows (see Verses 14–19). **גַם זֹאת לא הָיָה**, nothing must be left of the crown until the coming of that future scion of David who will earn the right to bear the crown because he is profoundly aware of his duties as a ruler and will therefore receive a new crown from the hands of God.

**Verses 33–34.** The Prophet has seen Jerusalem and its royal dynasty fall to the sword of the triumphant foe. Now the Word of God calls upon him to address himself briefly to Ammon's display of malicious triumph. That bitter enemy of the Jewish people (see Chapter 25) has rejoiced too soon. The sword rages on. It also turns to the left. Even after it has raged against Judah it is still sharp enough to inflict deadly blows also on Ammon. **וְכֹל הַכְלִיל**, "to endure," as in Jeremiah 6,11. The **טַמְדִים** that allayed Ammon's fears will not help him. Let the world be led astray by its **טַמְדָה**. As Judah met its destiny (**לְתוֹת אָתָךְ אֶל־צָהָרִי תְּלִילֵי רִשְׁעָתֶךָ וּנוּ**) Ammon will also not escape its fate.

**Verse 35.** The sword of Nebuchadnezzar has not yet returned to its sheath.

to its sheath? In the place where you were created, in the land of your origins, will I judge you.

36. I will pour out My anger over you; with the fire of My flaming fury will I breathe upon you, and I will deliver you into the hands of men who are mindless but masters of destruction.

37. You shall become food for the fire; your blood will flow in the midst of (your) land; you will (no longer) be remembered, for I, God, have spoken.

**Chap. 22. 1.** Then the word of God came to me:

2. And [as for] you, son of mankind, are you indeed willing

אֲשֶׁר־גָּבְרָת בָּאָרֶץ מִגְּרוֹתֶיךָ  
אַשְׁפֵּט אֶתְּךָ:

36. וְשִׁפְכַּתִּי עֲלֵיךְ וְעַמִּי בְּאָשׁ  
עֲבָרָתִי אֲפִים עַלְיךְ וְנִתְחַדֵּךְ בְּנֵר  
אֲנָשִׁים בְּעָרִים חֶרְשִׁי מִשְׁחִיתָה:

37. לֹא־שְׁתִּהְרֹר לְאַכְלָה רַפְּךָ יְהִינָּה  
בְּתֻךְ הָאָרֶץ לֹא תִּזְכְּרִי כִּי אָנִי  
יְהִינָּה רַבְּרוֹתִי פָּ

כ ב וְיוֹתֵירְכְּרִיזְנָה אֵלִיל אָמָרָ:

ב וְאֶתְּךָ גּוֹדָרָם הַתְּשִׁפְטָ

It uproots Ammon from the soil from which it had hoped to draw invincible power. **מִכְרֹחֶץ**, see Chapter 16, Verse 3.

**Verses 36–37.** Ammon is devoured by the flames of God's wrath. The fire was set by God Himself. The Babylonians are only the fire in the hands of God. **אֲנָשִׁים בָּעָרִים** is an ingenious play on words: "Men without reason" (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 94,8). Although they are no better than those whom they have conquered, God is using them as a tool because they are masters in the arts of destruction.

Ammon is bleeding to death from the blows of the Babylonian sword; the flames have devoured him completely. **לֹא חֹכְרִי**: Since **הָ** has decided on its total annihilation, Ammon vanishes from history without a trace (see commentary to Chapter 25, Verse 7).

**Chapter 22, Verses 1–2.** The Prophet saw the commonwealth losing its life-blood by the sword of the triumphant foe. But Ezekiel knew that, by the grace of God, this commonwealth would eventually be restored to new life. God was never closer to His people than at the moment when He seemed to have abandoned them to the merciless foe. The doomed "city of blood guilt"

to take up the cause of the city of blood guilt? Then make her aware of all her abominations.

3. And say: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: O city that sheds blood

**בְּתַשְׁפֵּט אֶת־עִיר הַרְמִים  
וְהַדָּעַתָּה אֲתִכְלַתְעֻבּוֹתֶיהָ:**

**וְאָמְרָתָךְ בָּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה  
עִיר שְׁפָכָת קָם בְּתוּךָ לְבֵיא**

will have a defender even now in this particular Prophet. Ezekiel would labor without cease to make the people realize that they had brought this catastrophe upon themselves by their sins and that God had inflicted this harsh punishment upon them only as part of His work for their spiritual regeneration. Thus, Chapter 22 is simply a continuation of the trend of thought begun in Chapter 20. What Chapter 20 sought to accomplish by a retrospective survey of the past (Chapter 20, Verse 4: **(חוּבָת אָבוֹת)**), the present chapter seeks to achieve by describing the depravity of the people in Ezekiel's own day (**חוּבָת אֶת כָּל הַחַשְׁבָּה**; see Chapter 20, Verse 4).

**עיר הרמים**: As he describes the corruption that prevailed among the Jewish people in his day, the Prophet recalls the precepts that were set down in the nineteenth chapter of Leviticus with the objective of attaining for the Jewish people a state of **קדשָׂה**. But the basic thought underlying these laws makes it clear that social justice can survive only in a nation in which both the personal and familial aspects of life reflect the standards of moral purity set by the Law of God. Only if a nation's children can respect their parents and emulate their parents' godly way of life in theory and practice, only if a nation observes God's Sabbath in stringent detail, only if that nation allows the ideals symbolized by God's own Sanctuary to govern every phase of its life and resists all notions alien to these ideals, only if its people scrupulously observe the Divine laws regulating the dietary and sexual aspects of their lives, can the Divine laws of social justice effectively keep that society from committing acts of "blood guilt." Those who have no qualms about murdering their own souls by shamelessly indulging in activities that God has characterized as **חוּבָת** might also not recoil from taking the lives of their fellow men. This is the broader interpretation in which we should construe the term **עיר הרמים** in this chapter; all the **חוּבָת** enumerated in the verses that follow have turned Jerusalem into an **עיר הרמים**.

**Verse 3.** **לְבָאוֹתָה** (see Mendel Hirsch, *Hafmoroth*, ס' **אתרי מות**; also Ezekiel 7,7). Even at this critical stage Jerusalem had not yet come to her senses. Her people continued shedding the blood of others even while the Prophet already beheld, in his mind's eye, the rivers of their blood gushing

in her midst (even now) when her doom approaches, after making idols her masters, to defile herself!

4. Through your blood that you have shed you have incurred guilt punishable by devastation, and because of the idolatries you have committed you have become unclean; thus you have hastened the days of your doom and [prematurely] met your years. Therefore I have made you a disgrace to the nations and a mockery to all lands.

5. Those that are near to you and those that are far from you will mock you—you, who have defiled your name and within whom the unrest of dismay is (therefore) great.

6. Behold, the princes of Israel—each one of them has used you only to serve his own aim in order to shed blood.

from countless wounds inflicted upon them by the enemy. And yet this was only natural. Should people whose lives were ruled by נולדים have recoiled at the sight of the blood of others? The madness of their נולדים had robbed their lives of טהרה; that is why the people of Jerusalem were steeped in blood.

*Verse 4.* ימץ שטחץ: If "days" in this verse denotes the period of suffering that was in store for the nation, then "years" would imply the growing intensity and the endlessness of the nation's sufferings that began during those "days."

*Verse 5.* The nations know that Israel had expected a very different sort of "day;" hence they gloat over its misfortune. The people of Israel in Ezekiel's day should have known that this "day" could bring them only טהומה since they had brought such shame and dishonor on their own name which is inextricably bound up with the name of God. See Chapter 7, Verse 7: "The day is near (which will bring) anxiety and consternation (טהומת) instead of exultation from the hills" (see our commentary, *ibid.*).

*Verse 6.* לטען שער רם: Israel's princes in Ezekiel's day set an example of ruthlessness and selfishness which inevitably caused a general disregard of moral principles and of the dictates of conscience.

עטה ועשתה גלולים עליה:  
לטמאה:

4. בךמר אשר-שְׁפָכַת אֲשֶׁר-  
ובגלוּיוֹךְ אֲשֶׁר-עִשְׂתָּךְ טְמַאת  
וַתִּקְרַבְיָךְ מִפְּרוֹתְּכָוָא עַד-שְׁנוֹתֵיכְךָ  
על-פָּנֶיךָ נִתְּמַעַרְתָּךְ לְנוּסָוָא וְקָלָה  
לְכָל-הָאָרֶצֶת:

5. בקרבות ו/orוקות טפָּךְ  
וַתִּקְלַסְתְּךָ טְמַאת הַשֵּׁם רְבַת  
טְהוֹמָה:

6. הנה נְשִׂיאֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אִישׁ לְזַרְעוֹ  
קַיְוַה בְּךָ לְפָעֵן שְׁפָרְךָם:

7. Father and mother have been degraded within you; the rights of the stranger in your midst have been curtailed; orphans and widows were offended within you.

8. You have despised My sanctities and profaned My Sabbaths.

9. Talebearers were in your midst to shed blood; [people] in your midst faced mountains while they ate; lewdness has been committed in your midst.

10. The father's nakedness has been uncovered within you; they have ravished within you her that was unclean during her period of separation.

11. Each has been guilty of iniquity with his neighbor's wife, and each has lewdly dishonored his daughter-in-law; each has ravished his [own] sister, his father's daughter, within you.

12. Bribes have been taken within you to shed blood; you have taken interest and increase and you have exploited your neighbor by

וְאֵב וְאֶם תִּקְלֹו בָּךְ לְעַד עֲשֹׂו  
בְּעַשְׁק בְּתוֹךְ יְתֻמָּה וְאֶלְמָנָה הָנוּ  
בָּךְ:

8. גְּדוּשֵׁי בְּנִית וְאֶתְ-שְׁבָתָתִי  
חַלְלָתִי:

9. אַנְשֵׁי רְכִילְתִּיו בָּךְ לְמַעַן שְׁפָדָה  
גְּסֹוָאֵלְהָרִים אָכְלוּ בָּךְ זְמָה עֲשֹׂו  
בְּתוֹךְ:

10. עֲרוֹתָדָב גָּלְהָבָד טְמַמָּת  
הַגְּרָה עֲנוּדָבָה:

11. וְאֵישׁ | אֶתְ-אֶשֶׁת רְעוֹה עֲשֹׂה  
תְּהֻנָּה וְאֵישׁ אֶתְ-בְּלָתוֹ טְמָא  
בְּזָמָה וְאֵישׁ אֶתְ-אֶחָתוֹ בְּתְ-אָבִיו  
עֲנָה-בָּבָה:

12. שְׁחָד לְקָחוֹרְבָּד לְמַעַן שְׁפָדָה  
רֵם נְשָׁד וְתַרְבִּית לְקַחַת וְתַבְּאַשׁ

**Verses 7–8.** Do you wonder, the Prophet asks his people, why your fathers and mothers are no longer respected, why strangers can find no one to care for them, and why widows and orphans are humiliated? It is because the Word of God that emanates from the Sanctuary is no longer honored as binding and the Sabbath, which summons the Jew to consecrate his life to God and to render Him homage, has disappeared from the life of the nation.

**Verses 9–12.** Because they had become totally depraved in their physical pleasures and sexual habits, the people no longer heeded the Divine admonitions that should have taught them the importance of safeguarding the integrity and welfare of their fellow man. Once the Jewish nation no longer observed the **וראות**, it also quickly came to disregard the **מצוות**. To stress this point, the transgressions of the **חוקים** enumerated in Verses 9–11 are preceded and

רְעִירַב בְּעֶשֶׂק וְאֹתֶן שְׁבַחַת נָאָם  
אֲרֹנֵי יְהוָה:  
curtailing [his] rights, but Me  
you had forgotten, is the  
pronouncement of my Lord, God,  
Who reveals His loving kindness  
in justice.

13. Behold, I have already  
struck My hands together because  
of your selfishness with which you

נו. וְהַגְּהַתְּ הַקְּרִיטִי כִּפְרִי אַל-בְּצַעַךְ

followed by violations of **משפטיים**, for both these classes of law stem from the same source. A nation that cannot ensure proper respect for the **חוקים** will labor in vain to stem the social degeneration of its people. **לְטֻפָּן שְׁקָד דָם**: The words **אנְשׁ רְכִיל** **חוֹקָה** represent an intensification of this is in the spirit of **לְאַל** **תְּלַקְנָה רְכִיל** **בְּעַמְךָ לֹא** **חָפֵד עַל דָם רָעָן**. (Leviticus 19,16).

**אַל הַהֲרִיס וּנוּ**: see Chapter 18,16. We might add that the transgression implicit in **אַל הַהֲרִיס אֲכַלּוּ** is cited here in connection with the prohibition of **לְאַל** **תְּאַכְלָוּ עַל הָרָם** (Leviticus 19,26). This would be in support of our interpretation of **אַל הַהֲרִיס אֲכַלּוּ**, since the prohibition **לֹא תְּאַכְלָוּ עַל הָרָם** forbids any physical enjoyment that is contrary to the concept of man's free-willed moral calling (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,26).

The transgressions of the laws against **עֲרֵירָה** are enumerated with increasing intensity. It begins with examples of individuals (note the singular form in **עֲרֵירָה אֲבָבָלָה קָנָה**) who wantonly transgressed moral restraints decreed by God. As a consequence of these transgressions by individuals, the people as a whole (note the plural form in **סְמָתָה תְּנַדֵּה גַּזְבָּה**) lost respect for the **וְרָה** laws that govern marital relations. The ultimate natural consequence of this attitude toward God's moral laws was widespread degradation (**וְרִישָׁת אֲתָה וּנוּ**).

The important place given here to the prohibition against the charging or payment of interest in transactions with a fellow Jew was meant to point up the erosion of all the ideals of social justice among the people. The fact that the people no longer recoiled from acts that undermined the welfare of their fellow man was directly attributable to their wholesale disregard of this prohibition. Its purpose had been to uphold the Divine ideal of solidarity among all elements of the Jewish nation so that the affluent, if needed, would share without charge, his wealth with his less fortunate neighbor. Once that prohibition was no longer observed (**אַחֲרֵי שְׁבָטָה**), each man's **רְגַע**, whose brother should have willingly acted as his "pasture," became the victim of ruthless exploitation instead. [**רְגַע** "neighbor" is related to **רְגַעַת**, "shepherd." The implication is that each person should do his best to supply what his neighbor needs.]

Verse 13. Such was the nation whose defeat the Prophet beheld and whose

acted and because of (all the many deeds) of blood guilt within you.

**14.** Will your resolve endure, will your hands remain steady in the days when I will re-create you? I, **ה'**, have spoken; I shall carry it out.

**15.** I will scatter you among the nations and disperse you among the lands, and thus will I cause your impurity to vanish from you.

**16.** And so you will regain possession of yourself in the sight of the nations, and you will know that I am **ה'**.

**17.** And the word of God came to me:

אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂת וְעַל־דָּמֶךְ אֲשֶׁר־הִזְבַּחַת:  
בְּתוֹךְ:

14. הַיְשָׁמֵר לְבָדָם תְּחֻקָּה בְּרוּךְ  
לִימִם אֲשֶׁר אָנָי עָשָׂה אָוֶת אָנָי  
יוֹלָה דְּבָרַתִּי וְעַשְׂיוֹתִי

15. וְהַפִּיצוּתִי אָוֶת בְּנוּיִם  
נוֹרִיתִיךְ בָּאָרֶצֶת וְהַתְּמִתְּרִיכִי  
סְקָמָתְךָ מִפְּךָ:

16. וְנַחֲלַת בְּךָ לְעֵינֵי גּוֹיִם וְיַדְעַת  
כִּי־אָנָי וּלְהָהָרָה:

17. וְיַדְעַי דְּבָרַתִּוּהָ אֱלֹהִים לְאַמְרָה:

downfall had caused him to wring his hands in despair (Chapter 21, Verse 19). But in his eyes the political downfall of his nation was the inevitable consequence of the widespread attitude of **בָּשָׁע** (taking profit) among the people at large, an attitude which also corroded the moral life of the individual members of the nation (cf. Chapter 18, Verse 12): **כִּי־חֲפֹאת כִּתְבָּה יְהוָקָאֵל וּמְכֻלָּם**: **לֹא חָמָם אֵלָא בְּנֹול** (**ילּוּקָת**): this implies that all the phenomena of social corruption had one and the same cause.

*Verse 14.* However, God takes action because He is concerned about His people; if He did not intervene, they would be doomed to utter ruin. Much against their will, they must submit to the process of rehabilitation planned for them by God. Resistance on their part would be futile because God is determined to heal His people.

*Verses 15–16.* The dispersion of the Jewish people among the nations was only a strenuous process of refinement which Israel had to undergo in order to regain its purity. **וְנַחֲלַת בְּךָ** (see Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth, מות נ"ט*) is a *pi'el* form, more intense than the *kal*; i.e., "Israel in this instance is both the subject and the object in the act of assuming its inheritance." As long as the people of Israel were filled with **סָוטָה** they had become alienated from their own true selves. But now **ה'**, in His infinite loving kindness, will help them find themselves again.

*Verses 17–22.* The people of Israel must therefore perceive the wrath

18. Son of mankind, the house of Israel has become dross to Me; all of them, they are copper, tin, iron and lead in the crucible; dross of silver have they become.

19. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because you have all become dross, therefore will I gather you into the midst of Yerushalayim.

20. As one gathers silver, copper, iron, lead and tin into the crucible to fan the fire around it in order to melt it, so will I gather [you]

18. בָּנֵי־אֶרְם הַיּוֹלֵד בִּתְיַוְשָׁרָאֵל לְסָגֵן כָּלָם נְחַשָּׁת וּבְרִיל וּבְרִיל וְעוֹפָרָת בְּתוֹךְ כָּור סִינְיָם כְּסָף הַיּוֹם:

19. לְכָנֵן פֶּה אַמְרֵר אֲלֹעֵן יְהוָה עָזָן תְּיוֹת בְּלָקְם לְסָגִים לְכָנֵן הַגְּנִי קְבָץ אֲתָכֶם אַל־תַּזְעַק וְרוֹשָׁלָם:

20. קְבָצָת כְּסָף וְנְחַשָּׁת וּבְרִיל וְעוֹפָרָת וּבְרִיל אַל־תַּזְעַק בְּיוֹם סִינְיָם קָרֵי.

poured out upon them by God as a harsh process of purification. For this reason, too, they must become aware of the blemishes that attach to them; once they realize their shortcomings, they will bless the wrath of God Who seeks to rid them of these impurities.

In the light of this analysis, however, it would seem that the people of Israel in Ezekiel's day had become "dross" through and through (Verse 18). Since they had broken away from God and His Law, they seemed to have lost everything that had once been "precious" in their character. (This is implied by the סָגֵן of נִזְבֵּב, "to turn away," and the סִינְיָם of קָרֵב, "impurity".) Hence their own resolve to turn away caused them to become rejected, סִינְיָם: it seemed that only dross was left, barely hinting at the silver that once had been mixed with it. But God's loving eye perceived the little silver that could be salvaged in the process of refinement; nay, more, קְבָצָת כְּסָף וְנְחַשָּׁת וְנוֹם (Verse 20); the impurities will decrease until only silver is left. This silver must then be freed from all remaining foreign matter by being passed through the fiery crucible of God's wrath. And once the people of Israel were aware of the dross, the impurity, that had become attached to them, they would never be able to thank God sufficiently for His mercy in that He never ceased to believe in the silver, the purity that was an inalienable part of their character; וְזַדְעַת כִּי אָגִי הַשְּׁמָכִי וְגֹרֵא.

Jerusalem is likened to a crucible; the flames that encircle her had begun their difficult work (Verse 20). לְהַמְּצָק: This is a *hiph'il* form. Has the נ been retained in order to stress the difficulties and the repugnant aspects of this

in My fury and flaming anger; I will place [you] there and melt you down.

לְפָחַת־עֲלֵיו אֶשׁ לְהִנְתִּיךְ בָּן  
אַקְבָּץ בָּאָפִי וּבְחִמְתִּי וּבְגִנְתִּי  
וְהַתְּכִתִּי אֶתְכֶם:

וְכַנְסֹתִי אֶתְכֶם וּנְפַחַתִּי עַלְיכֶם  
בְּאַשׁ עַבְרִתִּי וּנְתַכְתִּם בְּתוֹךְהָ

בָּהַתְּוֹךְ בְּסֻף בְּתוֹךְ כָּור בָּן  
תַּחֲטֹבָה בְּתוֹךְ וּרְעַתָּס בְּרִיאָנִי  
יְהֹוָה שִׁפְכָתִי חִמְתִּי עַלְיכֶם: פ

וְיְהֹוָה רְבִידְיוֹהָה אֶלְיָה לְאָמֵר:

בָּן־אָרֶם אָמַרְדָּלָה אֶת אָרֶץ לְאָ  
קְטָהָרָה הִיא לְאַגְשָׁמָה בָּיּוֹם זַעַם:

קְשָׁר גְּבִיאָה בְּתוֹכָה בָּאָרֵי

21. I will bring you together and fan around you the fire of My fury, and you will be purified therein.

22. As one melts silver in the crucible, so will you be melted therein, and you will know that I, I, have poured out My flaming anger over you.

23. And the word of God came to me:

24. Son of mankind, say to it (the homeland): You are the land that was not purified, nor rained upon on the day of fury.

25. Those that stand in its midst (as tools of) the conspiracy of its

process? The people would realize that their sufferings were not the result of blind fate but represented a deliberate, planned act of Divine providence, designed to train them for God's purposes. **הַנְּתִיר:** God carefully places into His crucible the masses of metal that are to be purified. The concept of "care" and "preservation" is implied also in the term (Verse 21); it is related to **נְשָׁמָה**, "to put away in a safe place for preservation". Or should be taken as referring to **בְּחִמְתִּי**? We will find it in the same context in Chapter 24, Verse 13.

**Verse 24.** Our translation of this verse is based on the tradition (ובחימם קיג). that was spared from the Flood. But now the land must go through a **מִבּוֹל** of its own to restore its **סְחוֹרָה**. Isaiah, too, compares the sufferings of the Jewish people to the Flood that engulfed the entire world in the days of Noach (Isaiah, Chapter 54—). It need not have come to this. But all the factors (Verses 25–29) that could have prevented disaster combined instead to bring the catastrophe upon the land.

**Verse 25.** To interpret this sentence as a description of the false prophets is difficult, since these prophets will be discussed in Verse 28, while the present verse, like Verses 3–7 of Chapter 19, depicts the depravity of the

prophets are like a roaring lion going forth in search of prey; they have destroyed human lives, undermined strength and dignity, multiplied its widows in its midst.

26. Its priests have violated My teachings, desecrated My sanctities, made no distinction between holy and profane, neither have they taught (to distinguish) between impure and pure, and they averted their eyes from the requirements of My Sabbaths—and thus I was profaned in their midst.

27. The princes in its midst are like wolves going forth in search of prey to shed blood, to destroy human lives in order to snatch gain.

שׁוֹאֵג טָרֵף טָרֵף נֶפֶשׁ אֲכַלּוּ  
לְסִן וַיָּקֹרֶב יְהוָה אֶלְמִנּוּתִיהָ הַרְבוּ  
בְּתוּכָה:

26. בְּתֻבְנָה חִמְסִי תּוֹרָתִי וַיְחַלֵּל  
גָּנְדָשׁ בֵּין־קָרְבָּשׁ לְחַלְלָה הַכְּרִילָה  
וּבֵין־הַטְּפָמָא לְפָהָר לֹא הָנוּשׁוּ  
וּמִשְׁבְּתוּתָיו הַעֲלִימָו עִנִּים וְאַחֲלָם  
בְּתוּכָם:

27. שְׁנִירָה בְּקָרְבָּה בְּזָאָכִים טָרֵפי  
טָרֵף לְשָׁפָרִידָם לְאַבָּר נֶפֶשׁוֹת  
לְמַעַן בְּצָע בְּאָצָע:

Jewish kings in Ezekiel's day. However, we believe we can obviate this problem by interpreting this verse in a manner supported by a similar passage in Zephaniah 3,3-4: the reference is to those Jewish kings whom Ezekiel describes, in retrospect, as **קשר נבניאט**, plotting together (*רואק=tie*) with the unscrupulous pseudo-prophets who were guilty of treason against the Jewish state.

**Verse 26. שׁוֹאֵג תורה:** The priests had long ceased to preach the precepts of the Torah in their true, undistorted meaning. They did violence to the Torah even before contriving to "adjust" the Law to the "needs of changing times." To this end, the truths symbolized by the Sanctuary, including the laws of קדשׁה and טהרה, that were intended to govern every aspect of human life, had to be explained away as "irrelevant rituals and ceremonies." The same rejection was dealt to the Sabbath whose observance was intended to have the same powerful effect on the daily life of the Jew. It was a matter of supreme indifference to these priests that their own activities had caused the Sanctuary to be destroyed and that they had distorted the concept of an almighty God. They had achieved their purpose. Freed from the bothersome pangs of conscience, their followers felt they could now do as they pleased. The Torah was no longer there to trouble them.

**Verse 27. The other ruling authorities of the state followed the example of**

**28.** Its prophets have covered for them with whitewash that does not last; they fancy nothingness and divine falsehood for them, saying: 'Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice' when, [in fact] God has never spoken [to them].

**29.** The people of the land curtail the rights [of their neighbors] and commit robbery; they offend the poor and needy and oppress the stranger in violation of the law.

**30.** And I sought among them for one man that would be ready to erect a fence and place himself in the breach before Me to protect the land so that I should not destroy it—but I found none.

**31.** Then I poured out My fury over them, with the fire of excessive anger have I delivered them to ruin; I have caused their conduct to come down upon their [own]heads, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

28. וְגַבְיוֹאָה טְחוּ לָהֶם תִּפְלֵל חֲזִים  
שְׁוֹאָן קְסֻמִּים לָהֶם כִּגְבַּע אֲמָרוּם בָּה  
אֲפִרְ אַרְנֵי יְהוָה וְוֹלָה לְאַרְבָּה:

29. עַם הָאָרֶץ עַשְׂקו עַשְׂק וְגַזְלָה  
גַּזְלָה וְעַנְיָן וְאַכְיָון הַוּנוּ וְאַתְ-הַנְּגָר  
עַשְׂקו בְּלֹא מְשֻׁפְטָה:

30. וְאַבְקַשׁ מֶלֶךְ אִישׁ בְּדִירְגָּרָר  
וְעַמְדֵ בְּפָרַץ לְפָנֵי בָּעֵר הָאָרֶץ  
לְכָלְתֵי שְׁחַתָּה לֹא מְצָאָתִי:

31. וְאַשְׁפַּךְ עֲלֵיכֶם זָעַם בְּאַשְׁר  
עַבְרַתִּי כְּלִיתִים דָּרְכֵם בְּרָאָשָׁם  
נְתַחֵי נָאָם אַרְנֵי יְהוָה: פ

their king, except that they abandoned even the regal stance of the "roaring lion" (Verse 25) and acted more like starving wolves, pouncing upon their prey to satisfy their greed.

*Verse 28.* See Chapter 13,6–10 and our notes *ibid.*

*Verse 30.* בְּנֵרַ הָאָרֶץ לְכָלְתֵי שְׁחַתָּה: God grieves deeply at the thought of having to afflict the land, too, with a flood because of the sins of its people (Verse 24). He hesitated for a long time in the hope that a leader might emerge who would save the country (see Chapter 13, Verse 5). But this was not to be.

*Verse 31.* The purifying fire that would now engulf the people would restore purity also to the land.

- כג וְיְהִי דְבָרֵר־וּלְהָאֶלְיוֹן לְאַמְרָה:**
1. The Word of God came to me:
  2. Son of mankind, there were two women, daughters of one mother.
  3. They had committed harlotry in Mitzrayim; they had committed harlotry in their youth. There their breasts were squeezed; there their virgin bosoms were touched.
  4. And their names [were] אֲחָלָה תְּנִדּוֹלָה אֲחָלָה וְשִׁמְוֹתָן.
- 

**Chapter 23.** By thus reviewing the corruption of the individual members of his people and explaining that the catastrophe about to strike them would be the only effective means for their moral and social regeneration, the Prophet acted as the advocate of his people. In the same manner he would now act also as the advocate of the Jewish political entity that was about to falter (Chapter 23, Verse 36). He would depict the Jewish state of his day in terms intended to shock his listeners. If this portrayal seems almost too revolting for our ears, and it would appear that the Prophet must have ignored all his own inhibitions when he forced himself not only to witness these abominations but also to describe them in the vocabulary of the pure and sacred language of the Jewish people, we must remember that our prophets never sought to mask or embellish the harsh truth. In the view of our prophets, a Jewish state which, instead of keeping the faith with God and clinging to the scrupulous observance of all His precepts as the only guarantee for its security and survival, surrenders its own sacred, timeless heritage in order to solicit the favor of foreign powers, is no better than a common whore. Our prophets did not think that any language they used could be strong enough to describe the corruption of such a nation. And so, if the picture Ezekiel would now paint of the corruption rife in their state would make the people recoil with horror, or even only respond with a blush of shame, he would feel that he had achieved the purpose for which he had given up all his personal life. Perhaps, he thought, the people would then understand why God, in His disciplining love, would find it necessary to put a temporary end to their political independence so that, after having gone through the rehabilitation of exile and suffering, they would be ready to receive from Him once again the gift of a reborn Jewish state governed by the laws and the spirit of moral purity.

**Verses 2-4.** Ezekiel can no longer recall Israel as it was when God first selected it. He could no longer describe Israel in the metaphor of the pure

וְאֶחָלִיכָה אֲחֹתָה וַתְהִנֵּה  
וְאֶתְלָרְנָה בָנִים וּבָנֹות  
the elder, and her sister; and they became Mine and they

virgin, with her Divine Lover reaching down to raise her heavenward to Himself and to receive her blissful pledge of eternal love (Chapter 16, Verse 8–13). True, Ezekiel had not forgotten this image, but he firmly repressed it. No, this cannot be. Israel, God's chosen bride, could not have become so utterly estranged from God if, even for one moment, she had pledged her troth to Him in undivided, pure devotion. Ezekiel already had said so in Verses 7–8 of Chapter 20 (see our notes *ibid.*): The depravity of Egypt that should have remained alien to God's chosen nation had robbed her of the bloom of her virginity from the very beginning. The corrupting influence of Egypt had left its mark and its corrosive effect had continued until, bit by bit, even the last traces of her former beauty had vanished. The breach that eventually was to rend the political and communal life of the Jewish people asunder could not have come about all of a sudden. It must have been produced by more complex causes which it should be possible to trace back to their beginning.

And so Ezekiel carries his metaphor to the following conclusion: The "bride" to whom God had wed Himself could not have been only one personality. From the very beginning, there must have been two brides with two starkly contrasting attitudes toward their Bridegroom. The name of the one was **אהלֶה**; the other, **אהלִיכָה**.

**אהלֶה**: "My tent is with her, within her." She had resolved to consider God's tent as her own, to view the tent that God had established when He had raised His Sanctuary (**אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד**) as the place where she, too, would spend her life and remain in a state of eternal union (**מוֹעֵד**) with God. The name **אהלִיכָה** conveys the thought expressed in Jeremiah 7,4 in his stern exclamation: **הִיכַּל הִנֵּה**. Every aspect of Israel's life should have served the realization of the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary and thus prepared the ground for her eternal union with God. But not so **אהלֶה**. From the very beginning, she refused to give up her own "tent" (**אהלָה**). She clung to the illusion that she could satisfy the requirements of her union with God even if she kept her own tent and visited the tent of God only from time to time for their mutual communion. Thus Jeremiah's lament: **הִיכַּל הִנֵּה**. Before long, this faithless bride stayed away altogether from God's tent and remained in her "own tent" to receive her lovers.

These two "brides" were two contrasting personalities, and yet they were the "daughters of one mother" (Verse 2). One and the same mother had prepared them for marriage; yet, they did not enter matrimony with identical attitudes. Or was it possible that, basically, both of them had indeed been the "daughter of one and the same mother," but that this mother had been a

gave birth to sons and daughters.  
And their names: Shomron—  
אֲהַלָּה, and Yerushalayim—  
אֲהַלְיבָה.

וְשִׁמְתַּחַן שְׁמֻרוֹן אֲהַלָּה וּירוּשָׁלָם  
אֲהַלְיבָה:

5. אֲהַלָּה committed harlotry while she was Mine; she lusted after her pretended lovers, after Ashur, to whom she felt close—

וְוַתֵּן אֲהַלָּה תְּחִטָּה וְתַעֲגֵב עַל-  
קְאַהֲבָה אֶל-אֲשֻׁר קְרוּבִים:

6. After those clad in purple, the governors and the princes—all handsome youths—after the horsemen and the riders;

6. לְבָשֵׁי תְּכִלָּת פָּחֹות וּסְגָנוֹנִים  
בְּחוּרִי חַמְרָבָל מְרַשְׁׂשִׁים רְכָבִים:  
סְפָקִים:

7. And she bestowed her harlotries upon them, all choice sons of Ashur, and upon all those after whom she lusted—with all their idolatries she defiled herself.

7. וְוַתֵּן תְּזִנּוֹתֶיהָ עַלְיוֹנִים מִבְּחֵר  
בְּגַרְאָשֻׁר בְּלָאָס וּבְכָל אֲשֻׁר-עֲנָנָה  
בְּכָל-גְּלָלָיָהֶם נִטְמָאָה:

Hittite woman (Chapter 16, Verse 45; see our commentary, *ibid.*)? For even אֲהַלָּה had not been trained by her mother in such a fashion that she would have come to marriage in a state of virginal purity (Verse 3). She, too, must have been under the influence of Egypt. This metaphorical imagery is the only explanation Ezekiel can find for the growing estrangement between his people and their God. He sees Samaria as אֲהַלָּה and Jerusalem as אֲהַלְיבָה, but both of them can be understood only in terms of their common past in Egypt. טען and שׁד: "to press."

Verses 5–7. אֲהַלָּה was the first to choose the path of depravity. She never regarded herself as belonging entirely to God. And so she was drawn (פָּנָב) at an early date to those whom she considered to be her "true" friends (see Hosea 2,7). She thought that she had found such friends in the people of Ashur, in whom she saw a kindred spirit (קְרוּבִים). She believed that she would find complete fulfillment by pledging herself to Ashur. She felt that her "Lord and Master" was too strict; He expected too much of her. He had never really understood her, whereas Ashur—it was all so enticing! What an elite! What splendid youths! She hardly dared dream that she might ever be able to win them for herself. She would have settled even for the horsemen and the charioteers of Ashur. This was what she thought she really needed, and she did not consider any conduct too reprehensible as long as it could help her gain the favor of such "choice" youths. She would show them that she was worthy of their attention. And so she threw away all the priceless gifts that her Husband had given her on their wedding day (see Chapter 16, Verses 10–12; our notes *ibid.*). She no longer attached any value to them because the most

**8.** But neither did she give up her harlotries from Mitzrayim, for they had lain with her in her youth and they had touched her virgin bosom and poured out their lust upon her.

**9.** Therefore I have delivered her into the hand of her lovers, into the hand of Ashur's sons after whom she lusted.

**10.** They uncovered her nakedness, took her sons and daughters, and her they slew with the sword; and she became a name among the women; they executed judgments upon her.

**11.** Her sister **אהליכה** saw this and she became even more corrupt

וְאַתִּתְפֹּנְתָּיה֙ מִמְצָרִים לֹא  
עֲזָבָה בֵּין אֶתְחָתָה שְׁכָבָה בְּגַעֲרוֹתָה  
וְהַמָּה עָשָׂו דְּקָרִי בְּתוֹלָה וִישְׁפָכוּ  
תָּנוּתָם עַלְיָהּ:

וְלֹכֶן נְתַתָּיה֙ בְּנֵידָקָמָאָבָבָה בָּרָה  
בְּנֵי אַשֻׁר אֲשֶׁר עָגַבָּה עַלְיָהּ:

וְהַמָּה גָּלוּ עַרְוָתָה בְּנֵיתָה  
וּבְנָסְתָּיה֙ לְקָחוּוּ אֶתְחָתָה בְּחַרְבָּתָה  
וְתָהִרְשָׁם לְבָשִׂים וִשְׁפּוֹטִים עָשָׂו  
בָּהּ:

וְוָתְרָא אֲחֹתָה אֲהַלְיכָה

important thing for her now was to show her new lovers that her desire was for them alone.

*Verse 8.* Of course she was shrewd enough not to cast her lot entirely with one side. She still had some memories of her past in Egypt. True, the embraces of Egypt had not always been exactly gentle. But she did not remember that. She was flattered at the thought that Egypt, too, was courting her now. She took these attentions as genuine declarations of love. Egypt was showering her with caresses! Should that have left her indifferent?

*Verses 9–10.* She had to pay a heavy price for her illusions. Those whom she had regarded as her true friends inflicted upon her the punishment she deserved. But that was already past history. (See our commentary, Chapter 16. Verses 37–41).

עָשָׂו: *הַמָּה גָּלוּ שְׁרוֹתָה*: see Chapter 16, Verse 39. *ibid.*, Verse 41 has instead of *שְׁרוֹתָה* *בְּנֵי שְׁפָטִים*. (Was the 1 inserted to add a passive connotation to the substantive?) "She was punished by those who themselves had been doomed to punishment." Ashur was no better than she. Therefore the women present at the scene actually had no right to feel outraged.

*Verse 11.* And what of Judah, **אהליכה**, who had witnessed her older sister's fate with her own eyes but had failed to heed the warning? She still "shared" the tent of God. She had not found it in her heart to make a complete break from her rightful Husband, but she lacked the inner strength to give herself to

than she in her lust; her harlotries [became] more than the harlotries of her sister.

**12.** She lusted after the sons of Ashur, after the governors and the princes, attired in matchless splendor, to whom she felt close, the riders and the horsemen, all handsome youths;

**13.** And I saw that she had been defiled—they both had gone the same way.

**14.** But she went even further in her harlotries; she saw men

ותשחת ענבתה מפניה ואתה  
תונוטיה מזונני אחותה:

12. אל-בָּנִי אֲשֶׁר עַנְבָּה פְּחוֹת  
וְסָגָנִים קָרְבִּים לְכַשֵּׁי מִכְלָל  
אֶרְחִים רַקְבִּים סָטִים בְּחוֹרִי חָמָר  
כלם:

13. וְאָרָא כִּי נִטְמָאָה בְּךָ אֶחָד  
לְשִׁתְוָהָן:

14. וְתוֹסֵף אֶל-תּוֹנוֹתָה וְתָרָא  
אָנָשִׁי טְהֻקָּה עַל-הַקִּיר אַלְמָנִי

Him alone. Was not her harlotry, therefore, all the more contemptible (השחתה)? Had Jeremiah (3,7–11) not been right when he declared Samaria's outright apostasy preferable to Judah's lack of principles? (See our commentary, *ibid.*)

*Verse 12.* The consideration that Ashur's embrace had proven fatal to her sister did not deter אֲהַלְבָה. (Note the change in the wording and the intensification in this verse compared to Verses 5–6.) Her older sister had felt drawn to Ashur from the very beginning. She had felt attracted (קרובית) to the foreigner precisely because he was different. She was tempted by his glory (לבשו חכלה) and his power (ונר). To be sure, even had to admit to herself that Ashur had not exactly behaved toward her as a קרוב. But consider the impression Ashur must have made on her and how she must have regarded the splendor of the Assyrian empire as the “epitome of beauty” (see Psalms 50,2: מְכָלֵל יְהָדָה), if, despite her own past experience, she was able to persuade herself that the Assyrians were her friends, her kindred spirits. (Note the חסר in the spelling of קרובים, showing the “imperfection” inherent in this illusion of hers.)

*Verse 13.* It is with profound sorrow that God beholds her doings. And so Ashur, smitten by the hand of God, goes down into the grave. Assyria's dazzling luster has vanished, her empire has gone forever. But does this bring about to her senses? Does she now, at long last, know to Whom she must look as the one sure guarantee for her political survival? Alas, not at all.

*Verses 14–16.* All she knows of the nascent, ambitious power of Babylonia is that it has succeeded in smashing Ashur—and already she begins to court

sketched on the wall, images of Chaldeans sketched in color;

**15.** Girded with a belt upon their loins, overhanging turbans on their heads, warlike figures all—pictures of the sons of Babylon whose homeland [was] Chaldea.

**16.** And she lusted after them, after what her eyes had seen, and she sent messengers to them, to Chaldea.

**17.** And the sons of Babylon came to her, into the bed of love, and defiled her with their harlotries; but after she had become defiled by them, she broke away from them.

**18.** She openly committed

### בְּשָׁרִים חֲקִים בָּשָׁרֶה:

טו. חַנּוֹרִי אֹזֶר בְּמַתְנִיּוֹם סְרוּוִיּוֹת  
טְבוּלִים בְּגַנְאַשְׁיָה מִרְאֵה  
שְׁלָשִׁים כְּלָם דְּמוֹת בְּגַנְיַבְּלָל  
בְּשָׁרִים אָרֶץ מַולְדָתָם:

טו. וְתַעֲגַב עַלְיָהּ לְמִרְאֵה  
עִינָּיו וְתַשְׁלִיחַ מַלְאֲכִים אֲלֵיכֶם  
בְּשִׁירָה:  
טז. וְיַבְאֵו אֲלֵיכֶה בְּגַנְיַבְּלָל לְמַשְׁכֵב  
לְדִירִים וּוְתַקְמָאוּ אֹתוֹתָה בְּתִזְנוּתָם  
וְתַטְמַאֲדָבָם וְתַקְעַנְפְּשָׂה מֵהֶם:

טז. וְתַגְלֵל תִּזְנוּתָה וְתַגְלֵל אַתָּה  
בְּשָׁרוֹם קָרֵי. וְתַעֲנֵכָה קָרֵי.

that new star on the horizon of the ancient world. She is like a woman who sees a handsome stranger and does not rest until she has won him. כְּשָׁרִים אָרֶץ מַולְדָתָם, the Prophet adds at the end of his word picture. All she knew of these images was that they represented Babylonians whose home was in Chaldea. But that was enough for her; she thought she knew to whom she now had to send the "messengers of her love." That is how Ezekiel viewed Judah's pitiful attempts to gain the friendship of the Babylonian empire.

חֲקִים בְּשָׁרֶה עַל הַקִּיר: This is one single idea, referring to אָנְשֵׁי נֶשֶׁר: the likenesses engraved upon the rock are painted over in brilliant hues; the "girded" (רוֹחֵךְ= "girded," Exodus 26,12), "overhanging." According to some commentators, טְבוּלִים denotes colored headgear (טְבִילָה is "to immerse," in this case, to immerse in coloring matter). This is probably a word of foreign derivation (see Gesenius).

**Verse 17.** And so Babylonia came, initially in the guise of a friend. Judah was only too willing to give herself to him. But she had to pay dearly for her rashness. When Ezekiel uttered these words, אַהֲלִיבָה already knew only too well what Babylonia's שְׁכֵב דִּירִים had brought her. Her transports of passion had left her with nothing except a degrading state of טָומֵת. And when, sadly disillusioned, she attempted to free herself from the fatal embrace of her false and dangerous lover, she realized that it was too late—חֲקָע נֶפֶשָׁה מִתְּמַתָּה.

her harlotries and uncovered her nakedness; then My soul broke away from her even as it had broken away from her sister.

19. But she increased her harlotries, remembering the days of her youth when she committed harlotry in the land of Egypt;

20. And she lusted after their concubines whose flesh was like the flesh of donkeys and whose issue was like the carnal issue of horses.

21. And so you recalled the obscenity of your youth when Mitzrayim, drawn by your virgin bosom, touched your breasts.

22. Therefore, אֶהָלֵיכָה, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will stir up your

עֲרוֹתָה וַתִּקְעַד נְפָשָׁי מִעַל  
בְּאַשְׁר גָּמָעָה נְפָשָׁי מִעַל  
אַחֲתָה:

וַתִּרְבֶּה אֶת־חִנּוּתָה לְזִכְרָה  
אֶת־יְמִי גָּעוֹרָה אֲשֶׁר זָנָתָה  
בָּאָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם:

וַתַּעֲנַבְתָּה עַל פְּלָנֶזְיָה אֲשֶׁר  
בְּשָׂרְחָמָרִים בְּשָׁרָם וּוּרְפָתָ  
סּוֹקִים וּרְמָתָם:

וַתִּפְקְדֵי אֶת זְפַת גַּעֲרִיאֵד  
בְּעִשּׂוֹת מִצְרָיִם רְדוֹךְ לְמַעַן שְׁרֵי  
גַּעֲרִיאֵד: ס

לֹכֶן אֶתְלִיכָה כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִים  
יְהֹוָה הָנָנִי מַעַיר אֶת־מַאֲכִילָךְ

*Verse 18.* But even this belated awakening did not bring her to her senses. It only led her to embark on a desperate hunt after other lovers, in which she cast aside the last traces of her sense of shame. For חִנּוּה, see Chapter 16, Verses 30–34, and our commentary, *ibid.* For מִזְרָח, see Chapter 16, Verse 36, our commentary, *ibid.* נִקְשׁ–קָשׁ = “to tear oneself away,” “revolt against.”

*Verses 19–21.* In her total lack of shame she turned back to Egypt, the “love of her youth.” True, by that time Egypt itself had lost its power; it was now only one of the “concubines” of Babylonia (הַלְּבָשִׁים seems to refer to נִיּוֹת בָּבֶל in Verse 17: see II Kings 24,7). However, this does not deter her from viewing Egypt as a virile lover from whom she hopes to get the gratification she seeks: אֲשֶׁר בָּשָׂר מִתְּרִים בְּשָׂת, see Chapter 16, Verse 26 and our commentary, *ibid.* וּרְמָתָם, see Rashi. And so, once again, she concentrated all her energies (פְּקָדָה) on continuing in the depraved ways (זָנָת) she had first begun to follow during the days of her youth in Egypt.

*Verses 22–23.* But by so doing, אֶהָלֵיכָה had only hastened the end she deserved. And yet it is God, in His quality of both הָאֱלֹהִים and אֱלֹקיָה, Who comes to her rescue when she seems about to perish. In His quality of הָאֱלֹהִים, God makes

(pretended) lovers against you, from whom your soul sought to break away, and I will bring them against you from all sides.

**23.** The sons of Babylon as well as all the Chaldeans: P'kod, Sho'a, Ko'a, all the sons of Ashur with them, handsome youths, governors and princes all, brilliant warriors and—invited [by God], horsemen all.

**24.** And they will come against you with [armed] might, with chariots and wheels, with an assembly of people; they will turn buckler, shield and helmet against you on every side—I will leave the judgment to them and they will judge you in accordance with their judgments.

עליך את אשר-נקעה נפשך  
מהם ובהם תרים עליך משביכך:

כ. בָנָיו בְּבֵל וְכָל-בְשָׁרוֹם פָקוֹד  
וְשָׁעַט וְקוֹעַ בְּלִקְנֵי אֲשֻׁר אֶזְרָח  
בְחוֹרֵי חָמָר פְּחוֹת וְסְגָנוֹת בְּלָם  
שְׁלָשִׁים וְקָרוֹאִים רְכָבִי סְסִים  
כְלָם:

כ'. וְכָאוּ עַלְיךָ הַצּוֹן רְכָב וְגַלְגָל  
וּבְקַתֵּל עַמִּים צְנַח וְמִנְן וְקוֹבָעַ  
וְשִׁימֹו עַלְיךָ סְכִיב וְגַתְתִּיל פְּנִירָה  
מְשֻׁפֶט וְשִׁפְטוֹךְ בְּמְשֻׁפְטֵיהֶם:

certain that she will not be able to rid herself of her Babylonian friends. They will come to her, and **כָל** כָּדוּם with them: all the names that follow in Verse 23 refer to satellite nations, including also the peoples of Assyria. They all appear, and that is how **אֱלֹהִיכָה** sees, once again, those to whom she had given her love in days of old. The description in Verse 23 is replete with harsh but thoroughly justifiable irony. Here they are, the **חָמָר** (this is stressed). But are they still "splendid youths" to her? They all have become governors and princes (compare **כָלָם** in the present verse after with Verse 6). All of them have placed their mighty fists upon her neck. Here we see the "warrior figures" (see Verse 15). They are **קָרְבִים**; in no way are they **שְׁלָשִׁים** (see Verses 5 and 12). All that is in the past. She has long ceased to regard them as kindred spirits. They are now **קָרוֹאִים**, guests, as it were, "invited by God to partake of the feast" (Zephaniah 1,7 וְכָאן הַזָּהָר קָרְאָיו). They are all only charioteers, but their reins are held by a higher Power.

**Verse 24.** **תְּהִיתִי:** Though they think they are conducting their own punitive action against Judah, they are in fact only serving as executors of the judgment decreed by God. The meaning of **הַצּוֹן** is unclear. It denotes a kind of military vehicle (this interpretation is supported by the context of the present verse) or it is related to **חָמָן**—**חָמָן** "mighty" (see **קָרְבָן**).

25. I will set My rightful claim against you, and they will deal with you in flaming fury; they will take away your nose and your ears, and your remnant will fall by the sword; they will take away your sons and daughters and that which remains of you will be consumed by fire.

26. They will strip you of your clothes and take away from you the vessels of your splendor.

27. Thus I shall cause your obscenity to fade away from you and your lewdness from the land of Mitzrayim; no longer will you lift your eyes toward them, nor will you remember Mitzrayim anymore.

וְנִתְתַּי קָנָתִי בֶּךָ וְעַשֵּׂו  
אוֹתֶךָ בְּחִטָּה אַפְרֵד וְאַזְנֵךָ וְסִירֵךָ  
וְאַפְרִיתְךָ בְּתַרְבָּה תְּפֻלָּה נִמְתַּחַת  
וּבְנִמְתַּחַת יְקָחוּ וְאַחֲרִיתְךָ פְּאַכְלָל  
בְּאַשָּׁה:

וְהַפְּשִׁיטָה אֶת־בְּנֵיךְ וְלִקְחָה  
כָּלִי תְּפַאֲרָתֶךָ:

וְהַשְּׁבָעִי וּמְתַדֵּר מִפְּךָ וְאַתָּה  
יָנוֹתֵךְ מַאֲרֵץ מִצְרָיִם לְאַתְּשָׁאֵן  
עִינֵּיךְ אֲלֵיכֶם וּמִצְרָיִם לֹא תִזְכְּרֵי  
עוֹד: ס

*Verse 25.* When they launch their fierce and furious attack on Judah the adulteress, they only act as instruments of God, asserting His claim (קָנָתָה) to His rightful spouse. *ואחריתך:* The body, horribly mutilated, has fallen to the merciless sword of the triumphant foe, and once Judah's population has been carried off into exile, all the remains of her former glory *ואחריתך* will be consumed by fire. (Compare *וְנִמְתַּחַת* in Verse 47.)

*Verse 26.* But before this happens, the attackers will strip her of the garments and the jewels with which her Divine Lover had once adorned her (Chapter 16, Verses 10–12). Actually, she herself had already thrown away these beautiful garments by giving herself to strangers; it only remained for the victorious foe to strip her of her disguise. The words *ברָבָה וְגַדָּר* (*Verse 25*) briefly anticipate the end, which is then described in the same detail as in Verses 39–41 of Chapter 16. The description of Judah's "execution," introduced by Verse 26, is continued in Verses 46–47.

*Verse 27.* But before the enemy, drunk with his victory, can deliver the first blow with the sword and with rocks, *אהלִיבָה* will rise to a new life. The victorious enemy thinks that she will die, but God wants her to live. The moment she becomes aware of her pitiful nakedness will mark the beginning of her moral rebirth. Her proclivity to *נָתָה* which she acquired in Egypt and which had "matured" into *זָהָה*, utter depravity, will be gone forever. She will

28. For thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: It is I Who will deliver you into the hands of those whom you despise, into the hand of those from whom your soul broke away.

29. They will deal with you in hatred and take from you everything for which you labored and leave you naked and bare; and so the nakedness of your lewdnesses will be uncovered, your obscenity and your harlotries.

30. This must happen to you because you lusted after the nations and because you defiled yourself through their outrages.

31. You have walked in the way of your sister; therefore will I place her cup into your hand.

32. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: You will drink from your sister's cup, which is deep and wide; you will become a

28. כי כה אמר אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה הָנָגֵן  
נַתְנֵר בֵּין אֲשֶׁר שְׁנָאת בֵּין אֲשֶׁר  
גְּקֻעָה נְפָשָׁךְ מֵהֶם:

29. וְעַשְׂשֹׂא תַּחַד בְּשִׁנְאָה וְלִקְחוּ בָּל  
יְגַיְּשָׂר וְצַבּוֹעַ עִירָם וְעַרְנוּיהָ וְגַנְלָה  
שְׁרָנוֹת זְנוּנוֹת וּמְתַפֵּר וְתִזְנוּנוֹתֶיהָ:

30. עֲשֵׂה אֶלְהָה לְךָ בְּגַנּוֹתֶךָ אֶחָרֵי  
נוֹיָם עַל אֲשֶׁר-גַּטְמָת בְּגַלְוְילָהֶם:

31. בְּרַךְ אֶחָותֶךָ הַלְכָת וְגַתְעֵי  
כּוֹסֵה בִּירְהָה: ס

32. כִּי אֶמְרֵה אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה בָּרוּךְ  
אֶחָותֶךָ תְּשַׁתִּי הַעֲמָקָה וְהַרְחָבָה

no longer seek the favor of alien powers (וְלֹא חָשָׂא וְנוּ). Her memories of Egypt and all they once meant to her will vanish, leaving only bitter shame.

*Verses 28 ff.* She must learn (as the Prophet now impresses upon her most forcibly) that even in this catastrophe God is acting toward her as both **בָּרָךְ** and **אֱלֹקִים**. But it is precisely for this reason that He has chosen her erstwhile friends, of whom she vainly sought to rid herself, as executors of His own revenge upon her; they will "strip her naked as on the day of her birth" (Hosea 2,5).

*Verse 31–33.* Together with her sister, she has drained the cup of drunken passion. Therefore she must now also accept from her hand the "cup of bitter fate"; this cup is sufficiently deep, wide and big (**מְרֻחָה**=large size) to hold all the ridicule and scorn of which she now has become the object. She will have

laughing stock and a derision—it will be large enough to contain it.

**33.** You will fill yourself with drunkenness and grief—a cup of desolation and numb terror, the cup of your sister Shomron.

**34.** You will drink it, drain it completely, and smash its shards and tear off your own breasts, for I have spoken, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**35.** Therefore, thus has my Lord

תְּהִנֵּה לֶצְחָק וַלְעֵג מְרֻכָּה:  
לְהַכְּלִיל:

33. שְׁבָרוֹן וַיְגַן חַטְלָאִיכְסָוֶשֶׁת  
וַשְּׁמַפְתָּה כּוֹס אֲחֹתָךְ שְׁמַרוֹן:

34. וְשִׁתְתִּית אֹתָה וּמְצִית וְאַתְּ  
תְּהִרְשֵׁה תְּנַכְּתִּי וְשְׁרוֹד תְּנַתְּקִיבִי  
אַנְּיָ דְּבָרָתִי נָאָם אֲדֹנִי יְהֹוָה: ס

לְכָן בָּה אָמַר אֲדֹנִי יְהֹוָה

to drain also this cup until she becomes drunk (צָה, "but not from wine" (Isaiah 51,21), a sad commentary to our text שְׁבָרוֹן וַיְגַן חַטְלָאִיכְסָוֶשֶׁת. Like her sister, she, too, will have to suffer desolation and utter numbness before she will once again receive new life.

*Verse 34.* She will have to drain this cup to the last drop (צָה, "to suck out"). This image of utter depravity, in which she drains her cup and then smashes it, cutting her own flesh with the shards, would arouse only disgust if this were an ordinary drunken woman. But in the case of Judah, this is an image of heroic self-purification. Once she has drained the cup of suffering that she has brought upon herself by her conduct, it will break into pieces. She will then grind the shards into dust and she will tear from her body the breasts into which Egypt had planted the seeds of corruption (Verse 3). This imagery depicts Judah's firm resolve to erase the last traces of her past depravity. The shards will then never have to come together again to form a new cup of suffering. "Even as the earthen vessel, once it has been broken into pieces, cannot be put together again, so Israel, too, will never have to suffer again" (Yellow). "You will not have to drink again from the great cup of My fury" (Isaiah 51,22). God, in His quality of י, utters these words at the very moment when the nations prepare to strip the depraved woman of her clothes before dragging her to the execution site. כי אֵי דְבָרָתִי, and that which would seem to us incredible will come to pass because סָמֵךְ הוּא, it is God Himself Who has promised it נָאָם—in the *pi'el* inflection, literally, "to separate the bones from the joints to which they are attached;" see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 24,8. Here, it implies the smashing of the parts that join together to form one vessel.

*Verse 35.* לְכָן: That is why all that has been foretold above will come to

spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because you have forgotten Me and cast Me behind your back, you must bear (the consequences of) your obscenity and your harlotries.

**36.** And God said to me: Son of mankind, will you take up the cause of אֲהַלְכָה and אֲהַלִּיכָה? Then make them aware of their abominations.

**37.** For they have committed adultery and blood clings to their

בָּעֵן שְׁכַחַת אֹתֶיךָ וְתַשְׁלִיכִי אֹתוֹתֶיךָ  
אַחֲרֵי גָּנָךְ וְגַם־אָתָּה שָׁאֵי זְפַתָּה  
וְאַחֲדַת־תְּנוּתָהָךְ:

36. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִ בָּרוּךְ אָרֶם הַתְּשִׁפּוֹת אֶת־אַהֲלָה  
וְאֶת־אֲהַלִּיכָה וְתַגְרֵר לְהֹן אֶת  
תוֹעֲבֹתָיהָן:

37. כִּי נָאָפוּ וְרַם בִּירְקָנוּ וְאָתָּה

pass. Judah will have to pay a heavy price for her frivolous behavior. God cannot simply be dismissed (וְתוֹשִׁילֵיכִי וּגְרָ). 12, "the back."

*Verse 36.* see Chapter 22, Verse 2. This is the purpose of the gross imagery we have just read. The same purpose is served by the verses that now follow and that epitomize the trend of thought expressed in Chapter 16. These words are addressed to אֲהַלִּיכָה whom the brutal enemy, believing himself to be the victor, is about to execute. But since his message is addressed not only to אֲהַלָּה but also to אֲהַלְכָה, the Prophet appears also as the "advocate" of אלה who has long been missing and presumed dead. Just as the catastrophe does not spell eternal ruin for אֲהַלִּיכָה, so it also does not mean total destruction for אֲהַלָּה. The text reads הוּנָר לוֹן וְהַגְּרֵר לוֹן וְהַרְחֵחָה not (as in Chapter 22, Verse 2): the realization will come only little by little; at the moment, the immediate necessity is to make her realize how low she has sunk. However, there seems to be yet another reason why the Prophet at this point must address himself not only to אֲהַלִּיכָה but also to אֲהַלְכָה. This is an expression of the same thought which caused the Prophet to take upon his own shoulders the guilt of the long-departed Northern Kingdom, an idea which he expressed by staring for 390 days at the image of Jerusalem under siege (see Chapter 4, Verses 4-5 and our commentary, *ibid.*). אֲהַלְכָה has assumed the inheritance of the guilt of אֲהַלָּה; therefore Ezekiel sees both of them before him. The shadow of אלה does not leave אֲהַלִּיכָה. This also explains the change from the plural to the singular in the account that now follows: in Verses 40-41, which are addressed particularly to Judah, the form of address changes from the third person plural to the second person singular.

*Verse 37.* Their blind, animalistic worship of nature led to adultery (כִּי נָאָפוּ)

hands; they have committed adultery with their idolatries, and even their children whom they had borne to Me did they pass through [the fire] as fodder for them.

38. Even this have they done to Me; they defiled My Sanctuary on that selfsame day and profaned My Sabbaths.

39. While slaughtering their children [as offerings] to their idols, they entered My Sanctuary to profane it on that selfsame day—behold, that is how they acted in My House!

40. And now they even sent for men to come from afar; a messenger was sent to them and behold, they came, those in whose honor you washed yourself, painted your eyes and adorned yourself with ornaments.

41. You sat upon a splendid

גָּלוּלֵיכֶן גָּאֹפוֹ וְנִסְמַחֲנֵיכֶן  
אֲשֶׁר יַלְדוֹלֵי הַעֲבִירֹ לְהֵם  
לְאַכְלָה:

38. עָזָר זֶה עָשָׂו לִי טְמֵאָו אַתְּ  
סְקֻרְשִׁי בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְאַתְּ שְׁבָתוּתִ  
חַלְלוֹ:

39. וּבְשַׁחַטְפָּם אַתְּ־בְּנֵיכֶם  
לְגָלוּלֵיכֶם וְנִבְאֹו אַלְמַקְדְּשִׁי  
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לְחַלְלוֹ וְהַגְּדִיכָה עָשָׂו  
בְּתַזְקָדֵשׁ בַּיּוֹם:

40. וְאִפְּכִי תְּשִׁלְחָנָה לְאַנְשִׁים  
בְּאַיִם סְפָרָחָק אֲשֶׁר סְלָאָךְ שְׁלֹום  
אַלְיָהָם וְהַגְּדָבָא לְאַשְּׁר רְחָצָת  
כְּחַלְתָּ שְׁינָךְ וְעַרְתִּיתָ עָרֵי:

41. וְיַשְּׁבָתְתָּ עַל־מִטְּהָה כְּבָזָה

and murder) (ודם בידיהם); see Chapter 16, Verses 20–21 and our commentary, ibid.

*Verse 38.* As a result, the Sanctuary of God was defiled (סְוָטָה) and the observance of the Sabbath, which had been intended to proclaim God's supremacy, became a monstrous farce.

*Verse 39.* They went straight from the altar of Moloch to the Sanctuary of God. The same hand that had presented children to Moloch (see Chapter 16, Verse 21) also desecrated (לְהַלְלוּ) the Sanctuary of God (cf. Jeremiah 7, 9–11 and our commentary, ibid.). Unspeakable abominations took place within the very halls of the Sanctuary that had been built to symbolize the truth of the Word of God.

*Verses 40–41.* Having eliminated God from her life, she became a shameless whore, courting the favor of foreign powers (see Chapter 16, Verses 23 ff.). *זָהָרַת כִּי:* And now alliances with foreign nations were to replace the bonds that had once bound this nation to God. But this was only a natural

couch, the table stood prepared before it; you placed upon it My incense and My oil;

**42.** And when the voices of the multitudes (reaching her) brought her a sense of security, but then (she lusted) after the men in the throng; drunkards were brought to her from the wilderness, and these put bracelets on their hands and the crown of splendor on their heads.

**43.** Then I said: (Such) adulterous excesses lead to total cor-

ושַׁלְתֹּן עָרוֹד לִפְנֵיהֶן וְקַטְרָתִי  
וְשַׁמְנִי שְׁמַת עַלְיהָ:

42. וְקוֹל הַמּוֹן שָׁלֹן בָּהּ וְאֶלְעָזֶר  
אֲנָשִׁים מִרְבָּכָה אָדָם מִזְבְּחָיִם  
סּוֹבָאִים פְּמַרְבָּר וַיְתַגֵּן צְמִירָה  
אַלְיוֹרִיָּהוּ וְעַטְרָת תִּפְאָרָת עַל  
רְאֵשֵׁיהָן:

43. וְאָמַר לְבָלָה נָאוֹפִים עַתْ זָנָה  
סְכָאִים קָרִי. עַתָּה קָרִי. יוֹנוֹ קָרִי.

consequence of her actions. She received strangers and, without hesitation, offered them the treasures that God had entrusted to her. That which was said in Chapter 16, Verses 18–19 regarding the forces of nature is applied here to Judah's new allies: they had now become the idols whom she worshipped instead of God.

*Verse 42.* The sound of the approaching strangers gave her a sense of security. (שָׁלוֹן here is a noun, as in Job 20,20). But this was not enough to satisfy her, and so she became increasingly indiscriminate in her choice of friends, so long as they were men (וְאֶלְעָזֶר, complemented by חַלְמָה in Verse 40). She no longer cared for class or rank; מִרְבָּכָה אָדָם, anyone would do. And so her messengers of love (טַלְאָר, Verse 40) brought her a sound of (סּוֹבָאִים פְּמַרְבָּר): she who, in her drunkenness, had cast aside her own dignity now received other drunkards and permitted them to place ornaments upon her body. There could be no more shocking image of Israel's depravity. The hands which God Himself had once adorned with the "bracelets that were the Tablets of His Law," the head upon which He had once set the "brilliant diadem that is the nearness of the nation" ("שְׁכִינָה צְמִידִים עַל יְצִירָה, עַתָּה נָאוֹפִים בְּרָאשָׁךְ") (see Hirsch, Chapter 16, Verses 11–12) now accepted worthless trinkets from drunken revelers. סְכָאִים, read as סְבָאִים: probably used here to associate the Sabbeans with drunkenness, as an example of the kind of friends the nation of God now sought to attract.

*Verse 43.* But at this point God Himself intervenes. He cannot hesitate any longer for, if these adulterous outrages were allowed to continue, His people would fall into total depravity: —לְבָלָה נָאוֹטִים (for see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 18,23). That was why all those on whose good faith

ruption; her harlotries must now cease and she, too, (must become unfaithful to her ways).

**44.** And he came to her; as one comes to a harlot so did they come to אֲהַלְתָּה and to אֲהַלְיכָה, women of obscenity.

**45.** And (they acted as if they were) righteous men; they shall judge them according to the law concerning adulteresses and according to the law concerning those that have shed blood, for they are adulteresses and blood clings to their hands.

she had counted now had to act faithlessly (צָחָה צִנָּה) toward her (hence the masculine form, צִנָּה). Above all, the mightiest of these, the king of Babylonia (צָרָה in the singular, for emphasis), should appear as Israel's most implacable enemy. This will clear the way for Israel's moral rehabilitation. She will give up her harlotries forever; her harlotries will vanish (צִנָּה צוֹנָה); she herself will become "unfaithful" to her past immoral ways: צָחָה צִנָּה—חָשָׁבָה.

*Verse 44.* וְיָבוֹא אֶלְيָה: "And he came to her." Indeed, he assaulted her and behaved toward her as one would behave toward an קָבֵד. אֲשֶׁר זָהָה קָבֵד: And along with him came the tribes that had become subordinate to him (see Verses 17 and 23). In most impressive language the conclusion of this chapter once again juxtaposes אֲהַלְתָּה and אֲהַלְיכָה. In reality, the reference is now only to Judah (see Verse 36), who must share the fate of Samaria since she had made herself the heir of Samaria's guilt. Judah therefore had to carry the fate of both אֲהַלְתָּה and אֲהַלְיכָה. This may explain the expression אֲלֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ that would otherwise seem unintelligible. In our opinion, we have here a singular form, קָבֵד קָבֵד, with a plural vocalization (קָבֵדים). This means that when the Prophet speaks of Judah, the one "lewd woman," he is, in fact, referring to two lewd women—אֲהַלְתָּה and אֲהַלְיכָה.

*Verse 45.* וְאַשְׁר־צְדִיקִים צְדִיקִים: When her foes assault Judah, they do so as if they were "righteous men," "driven by their own moral outrage to execute God's judgment upon her (see Chapter 16, Verse 38). Here, too, we think that the unusual construction צְדִיקִים (as in Verse 47) indicates that when the Prophet seems to be referring to both אֲהַלְתָּה and אֲהַלְיכָה, he actually, in this instance, refers to קָבֵד, meaning only אֲהַלְיכָה (despite the plural suffix, קָבֵדים is a singular form).

תְּנוּתָה וְחִיאָה:

44. וְיָבוֹא אֶלְיָה בְּכֻבָּא אֶל־אֲשֶׁר  
זָהָה בָּנוּ בָּאוּ אֶל־אֲהַלְתָּה וְאֶל־  
אֲהַלְיכָה אֲשֶׁת הַזָּפָה:

45. וְאַנְשִׁים צְדִיקִם תְּמִימָה יִשְׁפְּטוּ  
אֽוֹתָהֶם מִשְׁפָט נְאָפוֹת וּמִשְׁפָט  
שְׁפָכוֹת רְבָם כִּי נְאָפָת הָגָה וְעַם  
בֵּירְיוֹן: ס

**46.** For thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Let an assembly be brought up against them and make them an object of horror and contempt.

**47.** This assembly will hurl stones at them and slit them open with their swords; they will murder their sons and their daughters and burn their houses in fire.

**48.** And thus I will cause obscenity to vanish from the land—let all women conduct themselves with modesty [in future] and not emulate your obscenity.

**49.** They will burden you with your obscenity and you will have

**46.** כי כה אמר אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה הַעֲלָה  
עֲלֵיכֶם קָרְבָּן וְנִתְנוּ אֶתְכֶם לְעֹזָה  
ולְכֹה:

**47.** וּרְגַּמְתֶּם עַלְيָהוּ אֶתְכֶם קָרְבָּן  
וּכְנָא אֶתְכֶם בְּחַרְבֹּתָם בְּנֵיכֶם  
וּבְגַּתְתִּיכֶם וּבְרָנוּ וּבְפִיכֶם בְּאַשׁ  
וּשְׁלָפָן:

**48.** וְהַשְׁבִּתִּי זֶה מִזְדָּהָרֶץ  
וּגְנִסְפוֹ בְּלִיהְנְשִׁים וְלֹא תִּטְשִׁין  
קְזֻמְתְּכֶנֶה:

**49.** וְנִתְנַצְּרָה וּמִתְבְּנָה עַלְיָהוּ וְחַטָּאתִי

**Verse 46.** The verses that follow continue the description of the punishment (which was interrupted by Verse 26) in the spirit of Verses 40–41 of Chapter 16 (see our commentary, *ibid.*).

**Verse 47.** וּבָרָא: It is not likely that בָּרָא in this case would mean "to pierce;" it would rather mean "to slit open" so that the inner parts, which are ordinarily covered, are exposed (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1,1). This interpretation is supported by the fact that בָּחַק is used in the same connection in Chapter 16, Verse 40.

**Verse 48.** And so that against which the Word of God had warned from the very beginning לא חזה והארך ומלאה הארץ זמה (Leviticus 19,20) is now coming to pass in the literal sense. Because of the sins of the people that dwelt upon it, the land had become filled with immorality, and therefore it broke faith also with its people. God would see to it that the land would be cleansed from its sins, see Verses 10, 16 and 41 of the present chapter, and our commentary on Chapter 5, Verses 14–15. But did the nations take this warning to heart? All we know is that they carried out their mission of vengeance with "a double measure of fury" (Isaiah 27,8).

**Verse 49.** The nation of God had to pay a heavy price for its past sins. In their hatred of the Jewish people, the other nations certainly saw to that. The people were punished not only for their גַּלְוִילִים but, as we would understand

to bear their aberrations that led to your outrages, and you will know that I am the Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in His execution of justice.

**Chap. 24.** 1. And the word of God came to me in the ninth year, in the tenth month, on the tenth of the month:

2. Son of mankind, record for yourself the name of the day, the significance of this day: The king of Babylon advanced against Yerushalayim on this selfsame day.

גָּלוּלִיקְן תְּשַׁאֲנָה וּוֹרְעָתָם בְּיִאָנִי  
אֲרָנוּ יְהֻדָּה: פ

כֶּד זוּ הַדְּבָרִי הוּא אֵלֵי בָּשָׂנָה  
הַתְּשִׁיעִית בְּחִרְשׁ הַעֲשֵׂרִי  
בְּעַשְׂרוֹ לְחִרְשׁ לְאָמָר:  
בָּנִי אָדָם בְּתוּכִיכְךָ אַתִּישָׁם  
הַיּוֹם אַתְּעַצָּם הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה סְפָךְ  
סָלָד־בְּבָל אַל־וּרְוּשָׁלָם בְּעַצְם  
הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה:  
בְּתַבְּקִיר.

it (see Leviticus 16.21), also for גָּלוּלִים all their thoughtless errors that eventually led them to commit גָּלוּלִים. In their hatred, the nations, of course, looked upon the people of Israel as the sinful nation whom God Himself had cursed (see Malachi 2.2). They did not realize that the true purpose of their massacres and stonings was to bring about the rebirth of this nation which need only recognize God as כִּי אַנִּי הַ אֱלֹקֶךָ in order to be able to partake once more of His eternal, life-giving mercies (see Chapter 33).

**Chapter 24.** And then came the day when the Word of God put an end to the Prophet's sufferings, the day which God Himself recorded as a turning point in the book of Ezekiel's life and thus also in the life of Ezekiel's people. The spelling of בְּקָר (imperative) בְּטָבָק (infinitive) in Verse 2 indicates the timeless significance of this historic turn of events.

**Verse 2.** This day was given a name, so that it might live on forever in the memory of the Jewish people in all its historic "power" and "significance". (The word טָבָק denotes both these concepts; see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 139.15.) The impact of this day will put an end to the errors and delusions of the goyah; no longer will the people ignore the words of the Prophet. Henceforth, whenever the tenth day of the month of Teveth is mentioned, it will always be remembered as the anniversary of the catastrophe that was foretold by the Prophet long before and that has become part of Jewish history. טָבָק—in this context, literally, "to lean upon" an object with all one's strength.

3. And utter a parable to the house of disobedience, and say to them: Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Put up the cauldron, put it up and also pour water into it.

4. Gather into it the pieces belonging to it, every good piece, thigh and shoulder, fill it with the choicest bones.

5. Take the choicest from among the sheep, but also set afire

3. וְמַשֵּׁל אֶל־בָּיִת־הַפְּרוֹי מִשְׁלָו  
וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵיכֶם כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים  
יְהוָה שֶׁפֶת הַסִּיר שֶׁפֶת וְגַם־יְצָק  
בָּו מִום:

4. אַסְפֵּן גַּתְחָה אֲלֵיהֶךָ בְּלִגְתְּחָה טֻוב  
יְרַדָּךְ וְכַתְפָּךְ מַכְתָּר עֲצָמִים מֶלֶא:

5. מַכְתָּר הַצָּאן לְקוֹחַ וְגַם רֹור

**Verse 3-4:** וְמַשֵּׁל: For one more time the Prophet is bidden to use a **meshal** in addressing the *golah*. He need no longer be afraid to do so; the days when he was dismissed as a **meshal meshilim** (Chapter 21, Verse 5; see our commentary, *ibid.*) are gone forever. This is the last time that the *golah* as a **meshal** will listen to him.

**וְגַם:** (*Chapter 11, Verse 3*): This is the response that once sounded forth from Jerusalem and found a sad echo in the hearts of the *golah*. Even then the Prophet had successfully seized upon this **meshal** (*ibid.*, Verses 7 ff.) and demonstrated its ominous, frightening significance. The events have proved him right. His **meshal** starkly illustrates the catastrophe, the details of which will soon become known also to the *golah*. Its language is so clear that there is no need for a detailed commentary by God.

**וְרֹור:** The cauldron has been placed (that is the meaning of **רֹר**) on the fire. Plenty of water has been added; everything has been done to keep the "stew" in the cauldron from burning. The cauldron need not fear the flames that surround it. Note the change of gender from **יְצָק בָּו** (masculine, in Verse 3) to **נַחֲתָה** (feminine, in Verse 4) and **חַתְחָה** (Verse 5) which might indicate a "weakening" of the cauldron's protective efficacy. The people should not be disappointed if the cauldron is not their protection.

**Verse 5. וְרֹור:** The cauldron has been filled with the choicest cuts of meat and the finest bones have been added. Therefore it seems that even the best of the "herd" need have no qualms about joining this "stew." But the flames beneath the cauldron are fed by a pile of burning bones. The people in the *golah* know only too well that these bones are no longer fit for any purpose except to stoke the flames that do their work upon the cauldron and its contents. But despite the eloquent imagery of these charred bone remnants, they persist in their disastrous naivete. **רֹור** is probably a verb, from **מַרְוָה** (Verse 9), i.e., "a burning pile," "a bonfire."

the pile of bones beneath it;  
bring its boiling (water) to a boil;  
already its bones are cooked in it.

6. Therefore (does it come to pass)—thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Woe to the city of blood guilt, the cauldron in which there is only filth; its filth has not vanished from it. Take [it] out piece by piece; no lot has been cast upon it.

7. For her blood has remained within her; she has placed it upon a barren rock; she did not pour it out on the ground to cover it with dust.

8. To provoke anger and to take

העֲצָמִים תְּחַטֵּא רֶפֶחֶתֶת  
בְּסִבְבָּשְׁלֹו עֲצָמִית בְּתוֹכָה: ס

6. לְבָנָן בְּהָאָמֵר | אָרְנֵי  
יְהוָה אָוי עִיר הַקְּרָטִים סִיר  
אֲשֶׁר חַלְאָתָה בָּה וְחַלְאָתָה  
לֹא יָצָא מִפְּנָה לְנַחֲתִיקָה  
לְנַחֲתִיקָה הַזְּאִיאָה לְאַגְּפָל עַלְיָה  
נוֹרֵל:

7. בְּיוֹ רֶפֶחֶתֶתֶת הַזָּה עַל־צְחִיתָ  
סָלָע שְׁמַתָּה לֹא שְׁפָכְתָה עַל־  
הָאָרֶץ לְכָסּוֹת עַלְיוֹ עַפְרָה:

8. לְהַעֲלוֹת סְמָה לְגַנְקָם גַּנְקָם גַּתְתִּי

חַחָה: the water boils with increasing vigor. (The term רַחֲחָה occurs frequently in the Talmud.) Even the bones have boiled away. What will be the end of all this?

*Verse 6.* Woe! לְמַה—Therefore! God has poured out His wrath upon this city, laden with blood guilt (Chapter 22), so that it shall be doomed to perish in the fire of His wrath (Chapter 22, Verse 31). In the eyes of God the contents of the cauldron are not choice pieces (Verse 4) but only תְּהִלָּה, dirty froth (the meaning of תְּהִלָּה according to the מִשְׁמָרָת and thus indicated by the ה without a טַבֵּק), or filthy scum or rust (see Gesenius). תְּהִלָּה: The cauldron has not been scoured in a long time, and so it is still encrusted with age-old grime (as implied by תְּהִלָּה with a טַבֵּק). לְמַה תְּהִלָּה: The pieces that expected to remain safely in the cauldron, certain of survival, are sadly mistaken. Piece by piece, they are and will continue to be cast out from amidst the surroundings which they thought would protect them. לֹא גַּל וּנְרָה: No lot has been cast over the cauldron; not one piece will be spared. But then all this had been predicted, word for word, by the Prophet long ago (see Chapter 11, Verse 7: הַזְּאָה הַסִּיר long ago and Verse 11: אֲשֶׁר תְּהִלָּתְךָ תְּהִלָּתְךָ).

*Verses 7–8.* God saw in Jerusalem nothing but filth; filth, too, in the blood which the people of the city had impudently spread upon the barren rocks to

revenge have I placed her blood upon a barren rock that it should not be covered.

9. Therefore—thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Woe to the city of blood guilt! I, too, will make the flaming pile bigger.

10. Heap on the wood, kindle the fire so that the flesh may be entirely consumed; let the steaming cauldron steam away until the bones are also consumed.

11. And let it stand empty upon its coals so that it may become

אַתְּ־ךָ תָּמָה עַל־צְחִיכָּה סָלָע לְבָלָתִי  
הַכְּסֹות: פ

וְלֹכֶנֶה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים אֱלֹהִים  
הַרְקָמוֹם גַּם־אָנִי אֲגַדֵּל הַמְּרוֹרָה:

10. הַרְבָּה הַעֲצִים הַרְלָק הַאֲשָׁר  
הַתִּמְמָן הַבָּשָׂר וְהַרְקָחוֹת  
וְהַעֲצָמוֹת בָּחָרָה:

וְוְהַעֲטִירָה עַל־גַּתְלָה בָּקָה

make sure that the evidence of their crimes would not be lost. They did not even respect the Biblical commandment of נְסִי הַדָּם (Leviticus 17,13). אֲחִיה (see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 68,7). Let them not think they have bared their guilt in vain; they have succeeded in provoking God's wrath (להעלוֹת חָטָאת) and in preparing the ground for God's vengeance (לִזְקֹם נָקָם). The eye of God remains fixed upon the blood guilt of this city so that His wrath may be aroused and that He may appoint the instruments that will carry out His retribution (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 26,25).

*Verses 9–10.* Therefore, woe and woe again! God is waging war upon His own city. We see, rising higher and higher in a city already ringed by devouring flames, a pile of burning firewood to which God Himself keeps adding new fuel. And then, for one last time, God Himself kindles the fire (הַרְלָק הַאֲשָׁר) whose flames are to consume the last remaining scraps of flesh (אתָם הבָשָׂר). The choice pieces (see Verse 4) have disintegrated long ago.

But the cauldron continues to steam (הַרְקָחוֹת) until even the last miserable scraps of bone have boiled away (חרר). This is an intensified form of רוחח in Verse 5; i.e., from boiling to vaporization. See also יִרְחִיחַ רָחַח מְרָקָה in Verse 5; i.e., from boiling to vaporization. See also מְרָקָה יְמִינָה יְמִינָה מְרָקָה would seem to denote a "retort filled with a boiling liquid that is to steam away" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 30,25).

*Verse 11.* But for the cauldron, now empty but still surrounded by a sea of flames, it is a time of purging. The scorching heat of the embers is dissolving

hot and its metal may burn and its impurity may melt away within it, that its filth may vanish.

**12.** It has worn out all energies; the abundance of its filth will not vanish from it; only through fire will its filth (vanish).

**13.** You who [stand there] in the impurity of your lewd voluptuousness! Since I attempted to purify you but you did not become pure, therefore you will not purify yourself from your impurity until I can calm My anger that is now turned against you.

**14.** I, God, have spoken: It will come; I have done [it]; I will not relent; I will not spare and will not change My stance: according to your ways and your actions will they judge you—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

למען תחמס ותערה נחשטה ונתקבה  
בתוכה טמאתה תחתם חלאתה:

**12.** תְּאַנִּים הָלְאֹת וְלֹא־תְּצַא  
מִפְנֵה רְבַת חֶלְאָתָה בְּאָשׁ  
חֶלְאָתָה:

**13.** בְּטַמְאָתָךְ זְמָה בְּעֵן טַהֲרָתֶיךָ  
וְלֹא טַהֲרָת מַטְמָאָת לֹא תַּטְהַרְיָ  
עוֹר עַרְבָּגִינִּיתִי אֲתִידְמַתִּי בָּהּ:

**14.** אָנוּ יְהוָה דָּבָר תָּבִין כִּי־עַשָּׂיתִי  
לֹא־אָפְרֹעַ וְלֹא־אָחָס וְלֹא אָנָּחָם  
כְּדָבָר וּכְעַלְיוֹתִיךְ שָׁפֹטָךְ נָאָם  
אָרְגֵן יְהוָה: ס

the residue of grime that still clings to the red-hot walls of the cauldron. (This theme appears also in considerable detail in Chapter 22, Verses 18–22: see our commentary, *ibid.*).

*Verse 12.* This was the only means left by which to cleanse the cauldron after all other efforts had failed. (אתנים=תאות, "powers," see Psalms 78,51). להה, "to be tired." The word מָאָת is meant to be understood again after בְּאָשׁ.

*Verse 13.* The transition in this verse to the second person singular would support the interpretation of בְּאָמָר וְתָהָ as a form of direct address. עד הניחי, "until it comes to pass," see Chapter 5, Verse 13.

*Verse 14.* הנה: It is coming to pass. That which God's instruments of retribution are still only planning has already come to pass because it was God Himself Who ordained it (טוֹעֵן, "to release," "relent").

**15.** And the word of God came to me:

**16.** Son of mankind, behold, I am taking away from you the precious delight of your eyes in sudden death—but you shall not lament, nor weep; nor shall your tear come to you.

**17.** Cry out in silence, but do not make a mourning as one usually does for the dead; bind your ornament around you, put your shoes upon your feet and do not cover

וְיָחִי רַבְרִיאוֹתָה אֶלְي לְאָמֵר:

בְּנֵי אָדָם הֲנִצְיָה לְקַח מְפֻעָה אַתְּ  
מְחַמֵּר עִינּוֹךְ בְּמִגְפָּה וְלֹא תִּסְפֶּר  
וְלֹא תִּבְכֶּה וְלֹא תִּזְבֹּא רְמַעְתָּה:

17. הָאָنָק | לְמַטְוִים אָכֵל  
לְאַתְּחַשֵּׁה פָּאָרֶךְ חֲבוֹשׁ עַלְיָךְ  
וְגַעֲלֵךְ תְּשִׁים בְּרוּגָיָךְ וְלֹא

*Verse 15.* The day on which the Prophet addressed his people for the last time in the form of a **משל** (Verse 3) marks, at the same time, the last but also the greatest sacrifice God would demand of him. All his past life, until that very moment, had been devoted to the education of his people. It had been a life of complete self-denial. Paralyzed, in shackles, starving, parched with thirst, and all this without being permitted to utter so much as one word, he had remained in the midst of the *golah* as a **טָהֹת** (Chapter 12, Verse 11). Why, then, should he be reluctant now to make the final sacrifice that God, in His quality of ה, would demand of him?

In the sea of flames amidst which Judah collapsed, God's Sanctuary, too, disgraced, dishonored and ignored, must end its existence. The Prophet's **משל** has nothing to say about that. The people had ignored the Sanctuary while it was still standing; as far as they were concerned, it had ceased to exist long ago. So they had no reason to mourn it now. But he, Ezekiel, had loved the Sanctuary with all the passion in his heart. It had been "the delight of his eyes." And therefore his eyes could well overflow with tears. But he would not be permitted to give in to his grief. He must control himself, for God has appointed him as a **נָזֵךְ** for his people.

*Verses 16–17.* His wife who had been the "delight of his eyes" dies suddenly and prematurely (for the meaning of **טָלֵל**, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 5,24). (According to **טוֹעֵד קָטָן כָּת.** **מִגְפָּה**), she died in a **מִגְפָּה**). We are told (**סִבְדָּרִין כָּב.**) that "he whose wife has died is as if he suffers the destruction of the Sanctuary in his own days" (**כָּל אָדָם שָׂמְתָה אֲשֶׁר בָּאֵלָיו חַרְבָּה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בִּימֵיו**). We are told (**סִבְדָּרִין כָּב.**) that "he whose wife has died is as if he suffers the destruction of the Sanctuary in his own days" (**כָּל אָדָם שָׂמְתָה אֲשֶׁר בָּאֵלָיו חַרְבָּה בֵּית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ בִּימֵיו**). But the Prophet is not permitted to eulogize her (**טָהֹת**). He must not permit his sorrow to "gush forth in tears" (for **נִכָּה** see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis

your head over your upper lip, and do not eat bread that men hand to you.

18. I had spoken to the people in the morning; then my wife died that evening, and on the next

תְּעַטָּה עַל־שֶׁפֶם וְלֹחֶם אֲנָשִׁים  
לَا תִּאֵכְלָה:  
וְאֶרְבָּר אֶל־זְהֻעָם בְּבָקָר וְתַּמָּת

33.2). He must not even shed a silent tear to relieve the sorrow that is tearing at his heart. **ולא תִּאֵכְלָה:** The **וְ** in **ולא** directs the reader's attention to this final, most difficult demand that God has made of Ezekiel. Only a muffled cry (for **הַנֶּגֶק**, see Chapter 9, Verse 4) from silent lips (**דָמִים**) may bear witness to his indescribable grief. But precisely this silent cry is eloquent testimony of the manner which Ezekiel is now required to assume. It is an attitude that runs counter to all the well-known laws of  **אבלות**. In fact, our Sages (**משער קון טו.**) have deduced the Jewish laws of mourning from the physical acts of mourning that Ezekiel is commanded *not* to perform. In their view, the only behavior he shares in common with other  **אבלים** is his silence. For, according to Jewish law, mourners must observe silence. They must not greet anyone (**שאלות שלום**) and they are forbidden the Torah study that would distract them from their grief ( **אסור בדבורי תורה**). This might explain the unusual reversal of the words (**אבל מתחים**) in this verse (the normal sequence would be  **מתחים אבל**). It could be interpreted to mean that  **מתחים** refers also to **ם**; that is, "Let him fall silent as is the custom when mourning the dead," but let him *not* follow all the other practices of mourning.

His muffled cry will convey his true feelings. Those who hear it will understand that it cannot be indifference if Ezekiel puts on his  **תכלין**, the "ornament" that ordinarily must not be worn by an  **אבל** on the day of his loved one's death; if he puts on shoes, an act forbidden to an  **אבל** to show that his sense of personal identity which ordinarily enables him to "stand up" as an independent personality has been crushed by his loss (Hirsch, *Horeb*, Chapter 43); if he does not shroud his head as a sign that he is "wrapped up" in his sorrow, and if he does not take his first meal [after the funeral] from the hands of strangers (**טעחת הבראה**), an act intended "to make the mourner feel the ties that bind him to his community, thus beginning the gradual process of healing" (*ibid.*).

The sequence in which the things Ezekiel must *not* do are listed here corresponds to the behavior that could be expected in the normal process of grief and mourning: **תְּעַטָּה**—**תִּאֵכְלָה**, the outbursts of grief as such; **תְּעַטָּה**—**ונעליך**, the visible expressions of the state of mourning; and **תְּעַטָּה**—**לְתָה**, the mourner's relationship to the society in which he lives.

morning I did as I had been commanded.

**19.** And they said to me—the people, do tell us what this means to us that you act (in this manner)?

**20.** And I said to them: A word of God came to me:

**21.** Speak to the house of Israel: Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice; Behold, I will profane My Sanctuary that should have been the pride of your strength, the

אשתי בערב ועתש בקר  
באשר צויתי

19. ויאמרו אליו העם הלא-תגיד  
לנו מה-האללה לנו כי אתה עשה:

20. ואמר אליהם דבר-ירוחה היה  
אלוי לאמר:

21. אמר לכית וישראל כה  
אמר ארני יהוה הנני מחלל  
את-מקדשי געון עוזם מחמוד

*Verse 18.* אשר אל העם בקר: We believe that this refers to the Prophet's **משל** described in Verses 8–14.

*Verse 19.* מה אלה לנו: They gradually understood that the Prophet's behavior was intended to convey a message to them. They do not inquire, as they did in Chapter 12, Verse 9: מה אתה עשה. They had heard his **משל** with its frightening message concerning the tenth day of Teveth. Was the Prophet's inexplicable behavior intended as an additional message to them? They could not understand it; it was making them apprehensive. And so, both as individuals (ויאטרו) and as an entity (העם) they addressed their question to the Prophet.

*Verse 21.* If this "people," united by the knowledge of their own God-ordained mission, were to comprehend, even for only one moment, their true role as the "House of Israel," they would have mourned the destruction of their Sanctuary as the irreplaceable loss of their own "home," as if it had been the death of a wife with whom their life should have been bound up forever. But this people had long ceased to regard God's Sanctuary as the companion of their lives. It had no longer been the "pride of their strength;" they had no longer drawn their life's strength from the ideals it represented (see Chapter 7, Verse 24). It had no longer been the "delight of their eyes." Without **טומל נפשכם**, without a shred of compassion, they had brusquely rejected the spouse they had once loved (see Chapter 36, Verse 21: ואותל על שם קורש).

In view of their attitude, why should they now mourn the "wife" whose death they had caused by their own indifference? Their unnatural lack of feeling had extended even to their children. **אשר עובם:** They had failed in their duty as parents by withholding from them the basic, most precious values of life and by forsaking them for their own selfish purposes (see Chapter 16).

delight of your eyes and the object of compassion for your soul: [as for] your sons and your daughters, whom you abandoned, they will fall by the sword;

22. Then you shall do as I have done: not cover your head over your upper lip and not eat the bread handed [to you] by men;

23. Leave your ornament on your head and your shoes upon your feet, neither shall you lament or weep; you will rot away because of your sins and only moan one toward the other.

24. Then Yechezkel will become to you a symbol of convincing truth; exactly as he did, so you shall do; when it comes to

עַזְנֵיכֶם וּמִחְמָל נְפָשָׁכֶם וּבְנֵיכֶם  
וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר עִזְבָתֶם בְּחַרְבָּ  
יְהוָה:

22. וְעַשְׂיוֹתֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשָׂיתִי עַל-  
שְׁפָם לֹא תִּעֲטֹו וְלֹחָם אֲשֶׁרֶם לֹא  
תִּאְכְּלֹו:

23. וּפְאַרְכָּם עַל---גְּרָאשֵׁיכֶם  
וּגְעַלְיֵיכֶם בְּרֶגֶלִיכֶם לֹא תִּסְפְּרוּ  
לֹא תִּבְכּוּ וּנְטַקְתַּקְתֶּם בְּעֻזּוֹתֵיכֶם  
וּנְרַקְעַתֶּם אֲישׁ אֶל-אֶחָיו:

24. וְהִיא יְחִזְקָאֵל לְכֶם לְמוֹפֵת

20 ff.). Do they, then, have the right to weep for their children who are now falling to the enemy's sword when, as it were, they have murdered them with their own hands?

*Verses 22–24.* The Prophet instructs the people how they will have to conduct themselves when the Sanctuary will be destroyed. He does so by enumerating all that he himself had *not* done following the death of his wife, but in the reverse order.

**אַל שְׁמָמָ-לָטָם:** They will not be entitled to appear as mourners before the "society" of nations. They will get no sympathy from them, only scorn and derision (see Chapter 25).

**וּפְאַרְכָּם-תְּעִילֵיכֶם:** In order to be spared this mockery, they would do better not to show any outward signs of mourning.

**לֹא חִסְדָּו:** They will have no right to lament their fate since they themselves thoughtlessly are the cause of their own misery.

**לֹא תִּהְנוֹתָם בְּעִתֵּיכֶם** corresponds to Verse 16: As long as they cannot muster the moral strength to cast off their burden of sin but instead "rot" beneath it (see Chapter 33, Verse 10; see also Leviticus 26,39 ff.) they have no right to shed even one tear for their lost Sanctuary. **וְנוֹהָתָם** corresponds to **וְהַקְמָה** in Verse 17: only without realizing it will they heave a tortured, agonized sigh (for **וְהַקְמָה**, see Psalms 38,9) as they pass each other and exchange

pass, you will recognize that I am the Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**25.** And [as for] you, son of mankind, truly, on the day when I take from them the source of their strength, the joy of their splendor, the delight of their eyes, which were in fact only the burden of their soul: their sons and their daughters;

**26.** On that day the refugee will come to you to bring the tidings to your ears—

**27.** On that day your mouth will open toward the refugee and you

בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר־עַשָּׂה תִּعְשׂוּ בְּבָאָה  
וַיַּרְעַתֶּם כִּי אֲנִי אֱלֹהֵיכֶם:

25. וְאַתָּה כִּן־אַרְךְ הַלּוֹא בְּיוֹם  
קְחַתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ אֶת־מְעֻזָּם מִשְׁוֹשָׁן  
תְּפַאֲרָתָם אֶת־מְחֻמָּר עַינִיָּם  
וְאֶת־מְשָׁא נֶפֶשָׁם בְּנִיקָם  
וּבְנוֹתִיָּם:

26. בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יָבוֹא הַפְּלוּות אֶל־  
עַלְמָנוֹת אָנוֹנִים:

27. בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יָפְתַח פִּיךְ אֶת־

sad looks of mutual reproach. This may be the first step in a process of earnest self-examination. Once this happens they will recognize Ezekiel as a prophet, not only because his words and all his acts of self-denial had been justified by history but also because they will finally understand (that is the whole purpose of *מִתְהָמָת*) what it truly means to lose a precious possession that they should have cherished as men love their wives, and then not have the right to weep for it.

Once they understand this, they will gradually come to the realization for which the Prophet had fought from the very outset (Chapter 2, Verse 4) of his mission: *וַיַּדְעָתֶם כִּי אָנוּ זֶה אָנוּ*.

*Verse 25.* פְּעוֹם מִשְׁוֹשָׁן תְּפַאֲרָתָם (Verse 21): If they had looked to Zion as the source of their strength (פָּטָח) and the quintessence of their greatest joy (מִשְׁוֹשָׁן כל הארץ, Psalm 48,3), then Zion would indeed have been their proudest possession, giving them the strength of their lives (גָּאָחָת). But they had come to regard Zion as a burden (מְלֵל נְשָׁכָת) which they cast aside without the slightest pang of remorse: נְשָׁכָת (Verse 21). They abandoned Zion as they had abandoned their own children, “גְּנִיהָם וּבְנוֹתִיהם.” one would throw off an uncomfortable burden: אֲשֶׁר שָׁובָת (Verse 21).

*Verses 26–27.* But first a fugitive from Jerusalem will have to appear in order to bring the news of the catastrophe to those whose ears had remained deaf to the Prophet's warnings for so long (Chapter 2,5 and 12,2). The Prophet will await the coming of that fugitive eagerly, “with an open mouth” (see Chapter 33, Verse 32), for that moment will mark the beginning of a new,

הַפְּלִיט וַתַּרְכֵּז וְלֹא תָּאִלְמַע עֹזֶר  
וְהִנֵּית לָהֶם לְמוֹפֵת וַיַּרְאֲוִיכְאָנִי  
וְרוּחָה:

will speak and no longer fall silent;  
you will become to them a symbol  
of convincing truth and they will  
recognize that I am **הָנָה**.

**Chap. 25.** 1. And the Word of God came to me:

long-awaited phase of his mission. On that day he will no longer have to remain silent in the "house of rebellion" (**בֵּית טָרֵי**, Chapter 3, Verse 26). The historical events will then most forcefully bear out all his past endeavors as one great **טֹוטָה**. And this will also open the path on which the Prophet will be able to guide his *golah* toward the "recognition of God" and therefore to its restoration as God's own nation: **וַיַּדְעֻוּ כִּי אֲנִי הָנָה**.

**Chapter 25.** All the acts that the Prophet had been instructed to perform before the eyes of his people in the *golah* and all the words he had been commanded to address to them during this difficult period of transition had been intended to win him the hearts of his people and to have them accept his admonitions as a **טֹוטָה** (a symbol of convincing truth). Not least among these admonitions were the prophecies which Ezekiel, as "the son of mankind," had to make to the other nations far in advance of the events foretold in his predictions. Those were days of anxious suspense when, in the eyes of the Prophet (and also in his words, though no one listened to them), the catastrophe that had not yet overtaken **ארץ ישראלי** had to be viewed as if it had already happened and had become part of history. It was a time when Ezekiel had to address himself also to the other nations so that they, too, might someday help the Prophet break down the barriers that blocked his path to the hearts of his own people. These **טֹוטָה**-predictions that now follow deal with events that were to come to pass in the near future. Predictions of events that still lay in the distant future were reserved for a later date (see Chapters 35 and 38–39). In all these chapters the Prophet speaks as **בְּנֵי אֲרֹם** (see Chapter 2, Verse 1 and our commentary, *ibid.*), who seeks to guide not only his own people but also the rest of mankind along the path of moral elevation and lead them back to their original God-ordained destiny. This objective was constantly before him also in earlier Chapters (see 16,48–63 and 17,23–24).

It is curious that some of the events in the history of the nations at large (e.g., Ammon and Moab) are treated in great detail in the Book of Jeremiah (Chapters 48–49) but are only mentioned briefly in Ezekiel. The reverse is

2. Son of mankind, turn your face to the sons of Ammon and pronounce your prophetic message over them.

3. Speak to the sons of Ammon: hear the Word of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because you said "Aha" over My Sanctuary when it fell victim to desecration and over Israel's soil when it was desolate, and over the house of Judah when they went into exile,

4. Therefore, I deliver you to the sons of the east as a possession; they will erect in you their fortified

2. בָּנֵי־אַרְם שִׁוּם פָּנֶיך אַל־בְּנִי  
עַמּוֹן וְהַבָּא עַלְיכֶם:

3. וְאָמַרְתָ לְבָנָיו עַמּוֹן שִׁמְעוּ דְבָרָי  
אָרְנֵי יְהוָה כִּי־אָמַרְתִ אֲרֵנִי יְהוָה  
יִצְוּ אָמְרוֹך הָאָח אַל־מִקְדָשֵי כִּי־  
נָחַל וְאַל־אָדָמָת יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי־שְׁמַה  
וְאַל־בָּיִת יְהוָה כִּי הָלַכוּ בְגָלוֹתָה:

4. לְכָן הַגָּ� נְתַנְך לְכָנִירְקָרָם  
לְמוֹרָשָׁה וַיֵּשְׁבוּ טִירּוֹתֵיכֶם בָּךְ

also true, as with Ezekiel's momentous prophecies regarding the fate of Tyre and Sidon (Chapter 23) which Jeremiah (25,22) only touches upon and even then only in connection with the fate of the other kingdoms that fell to the sword of the king of Babylonia (but which are portrayed in the same majestic detail in Chapter 23 of the Book of Isaiah). This oddity could be explained only if we could be certain, not only in general terms but also in respect to particular details, of the manner in which the Prophets worked to complement one another, and of the relative significance of the events discussed by them as factors in their respective missions (see Chapter 28).

*Verses 2–3.* In Chapter 24, Ezekiel beholds the collapse of the state and the Sanctuary and he contemplates the unspeakable pain that will strike the nation. (*הַהָה*—shrill cry of malicious glee at Israel's misfortune; see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 35,24): it is Ammon, reveling in the defilement of God's Sanctuary, an event which Ammon interprets as the final defeat of the "Jewish God." Ammon happily looks upon the ruins covering the "Jewish soil" that had deemed itself better than the soil of the neighboring lands. With callous cruelty Ammon mocks the sad procession of the prisoners without a hint of compassion one generally feels even for a fallen enemy. Ammon's rejoicing had been the loudest, but it had been premature. Ammon will eventually have to listen to *דבר ה' א'*.

*דבר ה' א'* will be evident also in the final punishment that will come to Ammon.

*Verses 4–5.* In the first phase of God's retribution, Ammon will be attacked

tents and establish in you their permanent dwelling places; they will eat your fruit and they will drink your milk.

5. I will set aside Rabbah as a stable for camels and Ammon's sons as an encampment for sheep, and you will recognize that I am God.

6. For thus has spoken my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because you struck your hand and stamped your foot and rejoiced with all the contempt of which your soul is capable regarding Israel's soil.

7. Therefore, see, I incline My hand over you and deliver you as

ונתנו לך משבניהם הפתה יأكلו  
פרקיך והמתה ישטו חלבר:

5. ונתני את־רבה לגעה נמלים  
ואת־בנֵי עםון למראב־צצאו  
וירעתם פיראני יורה ס

6. כי בָּה אָמַר אֶרְצִי יְהוָה יְעַן  
מִחְאָקָע יָד וּרְקָאע בָּרְגָּל וְתַשְׁמַח  
בְּכָל־שָׂאָטָק בְּנֶפֶש אֶל־אֶרְקָמָת  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

7. לֹא כִּי הַגּוֹ נְטִיתִי אֶת־יְדוֹ עַלְיךָ  
וְנִתְּחַקֵּךְ־בָּנָן לְנוּום וְהַכְּרַתִּיךָ  
לְבוֹ קָרֵי.

by "sons of the East" (probably nomadic tribes; see Jeremiah 49,28) to demonstrate that it does not need the services of a great empire to reveal the force of His almighty hand. These sons of the grasslands will simply push Ammon aside and establish themselves within its borders. סיר: סירושים is an intensified form of דָּרָי, a "pen;" thus, here, a "rampart and a wall" (see Hirsch Commentary on Genesis 25, 16). They will set up סירושים, their fortified camps for their herds and שָׂכְנָה (note that this is a masculine plural form as in Psalms 46,5) and plant them firmly upon the land. This is not the usual practice followed by nomadic tribes but it seems necessary in this case, given the character of the people they have defeated. Camels graze where the proud capital (Rabba) once rose. The arrogant sons of Ammon had to make way for the sheep pens.

**עתם:** That is how God will remind them of His existence. They had forgotten that all the nations derive their land and their possessions only from God. The words of God כִּי לְבֵבְךָ לֹוט נִחְחָה יִוְשָׁה (Deuteronomy 2,19) apply also to them. God will now give Ammon כֶּסֶת לְמִרְשָׁה (Verse 4).

**Verses 6–7.** But this is only the beginning of the end. Ammon's diabolical rejoicing had been too great. With boundless contempt (**אֲטָה**) Ammon had cast its greedy eyes at Israel's soil because the time seemed ripe for an all-out attack (**שָׁוֹט**) on the Jewish people. (**שָׁוֹט**—see Chapter 16, Verse 57 and Chapter 28, Verse 26.) Ammon's punishment will be annihilation. After the nomadic

a defenseless spoil to the nations and eliminate you from amidst the nations and cause you to disappear from their lands; I will completely destroy you, and you will recognize that I am the Lord.

**8.** Thus spoke my Lord, God,  
Who reveals His loving kindness  
in justice: Because Moab and Seir  
say, behold, as all nations, so is  
the house of Judah.

**9.** Therefore, see, I will open the flank formed by the cities of

**פָּרָעֹם וְהַאֲבָרְתִּיכְךָ מָדֵן  
הָאָרֶצֶת אֲשֵׁמִיךְ וְנִגְעַת כִּי  
אַנְיָהוָה:**

ג. בָּהּ אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה יוֹעֵן אָמַר  
מוֹאָב וּשְׁעִיר הַנֶּה כְּכָל-הַגּוֹיִם  
בֵּית יְהוָה:

ו. לבון הנני פתח את-בפתח מואב

tribes have dwelt for some time in Ammon's midst (Verses 4-5) the same sword that had drawn so much blood in Judah will put a miserable end to Ammon; the Hebrew word כְּרֵב (רַדֶּק and בָּנָן, "food"—see Daniel 1:5 and the form לְבָנָה indicate plundering of their own food. "The sword, the sword, it will remain unsheathed also for Ammon" (Chapter 21, Verse 33). The terms describing the downfall of Ammon are in keeping with the words in Chapter 21, Verse 37.

And yet Ezekiel concludes his message concerning Ammon with the words יְהִי אָנֹכִי כִּי רַבְדוֹ, the same words that hold out the promise of a new life not only for Israel but also for many other nations after the harsh blows inflicted upon them by God will bring them to recognize Him. This would suggest that God's loving kindness is even upon Ammon, which certainly would have been deserving of total destruction. It would not be the only instance in which God, in His quality of 'ה', has granted rebirth to a nation that had vanished completely from the memory of men. This assumption of ours would be supported by the words of Jeremiah: וְאֶחָרִי כִּי אֲשֵׁב אֶת שָׁבּוֹת בְּנֵי עֲפֹן נָכוֹם הָה (49,6).

*Verse 8. The Prophet contemplates Judah's neighbor nations that had witnessed the Divine judgment which had descended upon Judah. But Moab and Seir viewed this judgment as an ordinary event such as had occurred time and again in history and that could be attributed to natural causes. They regarded the fate that had befallen the house of Judah as a misfortune that could just as well have happened to any other nation. It never even occurred to them that the destinies of nations might be guided by Divine Providence according to their merits or their sins. They were no longer able to picture God as having any part, no matter how insignificant, in the history of nations.*

**Veres 9-11.** To begin with, Moab must discover that the flank of fortified

Moab—from its cities on both sides: the beauty of the land Beth Hayeshimot, Bal Meon, unto Kiryasayim;

10. As to the sons of the east who assault the sons of Ammon whom I deliver as possession so that Ammon's sons will no longer be remembered among the nations.

11. I shall execute punitive judgments upon Moab, and they will recognize that I am ה'.

12. Thus spoke my Lord, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because Edom acted against the house of Judah through

מִתְעָדרִים מַעֲרֵיו מִקְצָרוֹ צָבֵי  
אָרֶץ בַּית הַוִּשְׁמָת בַּעַל מְעוֹן

וְקִרְתָּמָה:  
וְלֹבֶןְקָרְם עַל-בָּנִי עַמּוֹן  
וְגַתְתִּיה לְמוֹרָשָׁה לְקַעַן לְאַדְתִּיכְרָב  
בְּנֵי-עַמּוֹן בְּנָיוָם:

ו. וּבְמוֹאָב אָעַשָּׂה שִׁפְטִים וּוְרֻשָּׁוֹת  
כִּי-אָנִי יְהוָה: ס

כ. בָּה אָמַר אָרֶן יְהוָה יְעַן  
עֲשָׂות אָרוֹם בְּנָקָם נָקָם לְבִת  
קִרְיָתִים קָרִי.

cities intended to guard its eastern border could not protect it even from the invading "sons of the east" who passed through Moab on their way to march into Ammon. And while Ammon helplessly (note the feminine form of חוכר) crumbles under the wild onslaught of the nomads, Moab must feel the direct retribution of God (Verse 11). Moab had been "at ease from his youth on; he dwelt quietly upon his lees; it had never been emptied from vessel to vessel" (Jeremiah 48,11). But now the people of Moab, too, will have to learn the basic lesson ה' ז. "The Lord will appear awesome to them, for He will famish all the gods of the earth" (Zephaniah 2,11).

Verse 12. But as for Seir, Ezekiel does not look upon it merely as another mountain nation. He identifies it with Edom, with Esau, the implacable foe of Jacob from time immemorial: Edom has only contempt for God and for the principles of morality. It thinks it can survive by relying on brute force and diplomatic cunning (see our commentary on Jeremiah 49, 7 ff.).

In Chapter 35 Ezekiel will take this "mountain of Seir" to task and, in full view of the "mountains of Israel" (Chapter 36), raise the question of its ultimate fate in history. The answer is anticipated in the present chapter, since Ezekiel has been commanded to predict, along with the fate of Moab, the future of the bordering nation of Seir (Verse 8). When God was compelled to mete out retribution to Judah (Chapter 24, Verse 8), Seir exploited the opportunity to satisfy its own thirst for revenge upon its unfortunate "brother"

vengeful reprisals and thus incurred the guilt of desolation in taking revenge against them.

**13.** Therefore, thus spoke my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I incline My hand over Edom and wipe out from it man and animal; from Teman I reduce it to a site of ruins and towards Dedan they will fall by the sword.

**14.** Then I place My retribution against Edom in the hand of My people Israel and they move against Edom in accordance with My fury and anger and they recognize My vengeance—is the

ירוחה ויאשכו אֲשׁוֹם וַגְּנָכָמוּ  
בְּהָם:

כִּי לְבִן־בָּה אָמַר אֶרְצֵי יְהוָה וְגַתְתִּי  
יְרוּעָלָם אֶרְסָס וְהַכְּרָתִי מִפְּנֵי אֶרְם  
וּבְהַמָּה וְגַתְתִּי שְׂרָבָה מַטִּיבָן  
וַיַּרְגַּנָּה בְּחַרְבָּם וּפְלוּגָה

וְגַתְתִּי אֶת־גַּנְקָמָתִי בְּאֶרְדָּם  
בַּיד עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְעַשְׂוֵה בְּאֶרְם

(see Obadiah 10,14). Thereby, however, Edom ensured its own self-destruction (**טָמֵא**).

*Verse 13.* Edom thought she could safely put its trust in the "mighty men of Teman" (Obadiah 9), but it is these "mighty men," of all people, who will collapse, and the ruins of Edom's former glory will spread out from Teman. The sword will overtake the refugees on their flight to Dedan which seemed ready to grant them haven (see Jeremiah 49,8).

*Verse 14.* God delegates "His people, Israel" to execute His additional retribution on Edom. For "Edom will rebuild its waste places" ... כי חָמַר אֶדוֹם וְנוֹשֵׁב וְנוֹבֵן חַרְבָּתָה (Malachi 1,4), thinking that this would hold God's retribution at bay. The Edomite philosophy of life has no lack of spiritual heirs, but the cause of God will have champions in the people of Israel once they have been cleansed of their sins. Then "the house of Jacob shall be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame, and the house of Esau for stubble, and they shall kindle in them and devour them" (Obadiah, Verse 18). Israel does not take revenge for its own fate; with the ultimate defeat of the Edomite philosophy of life by the wrath of God that will strike Edom again and again, God's supremacy will be recognized all over the world, היהת לה הַמְּלָכָה (Obadiah, Verse 21).

But it will be a long time before this will come to pass. In the meantime, וַיַּדְרֹעַ אֶת נִקְמָתָה Edom will see its buildings collapse over and over again (see

pronouncement of my Lord, God,  
Who reveals His loving kindness  
in justice.

**15.** Thus spoke my Lord, God,  
Who reveals His loving kindness  
in justice: Because the Philistines  
have dealt with revenge and, with  
profound contempt, took revenge  
to the end, with unending hatred;

**16.** Therefore,—thus spoke my  
Lord, God, Who reveals His lov-  
ing kindness in justice—behold,  
I incline My hand over the  
Philistines and destroy the Cretes  
and cause the remnant of [those  
that live by] the sea shore to per-  
ish.

**17.** I execute against them great  
measures of retribution in repre-

כָּאָפִי וְכַחֲמֹתִי וְוַרְעֹו אֶת־גָּנְקָמָתִי  
בְּאַם אַרְנוּ יְהוָה: פ

15. בָּה אָמַר אַרְנוּ יְהוָה מַעַן עֲשׂוֹת  
פָּלָשָׁתִים בְּגָנְקָמָה וְגָנְקָמוּ גָּנְקָם  
בְּשָׁאַט בְּנֵפֶשׁ לְמַשְׁחִית אִיבָּת  
עוֹלָם:

16. לְבוֹנָה בָּה אָמַר אַרְנוּ יְהוָה  
הַגְּנוּ נֹטֵה יְדוֹ עַל־פָּלָשָׁתִים  
וְהַכְּרִתִי אֶת־כְּרָתִים וְתַהְבְּרִתִי  
אֶת־שָׁעֲרִית חֻוף הַיָּם:

17. וְעַשְׂתִּי בָּם גָּנְקָמוֹת גָּלָלוֹת

המה יבנו וגני אהרו (Malachi, ibid.). These disasters will also have part in preparing the ground for the ultimate recognition of God's sovereignty.

*Verse 15.* The Philistines, too, are among the neighboring nations that fall upon Judah like "beasts of prey" (Zechariah 9,7), hoping to destroy the Jewish people forever.

*Verse 16.* God will inflict terrible retribution on them for their crimes. תְּרִיחִים describes the Philistines as a tribe that dwells in the south (cf. Zephaniah 2,5; 1 Samuel 30,14). It also appears to be a meaningful play on words. We are told in Jeremiah 47,1–5 that the Philistines would first be attacked by Egypt which occupied part of their land; after that, they would be dealt the final blow by Nebuchadnezzar who would destroy what would remain of Philistia. Hence, הַכְּרִתִי אֶת כְּרָתִים would mean that "those who already had been horribly crippled (כְּרָתִים—"cut off") will then be completely wiped out." This explanation would also clarify the concluding part of the verse: "I will utterly destroy the rest of the coastal land" (i.e., the part that had been spared by Egypt).

*Verse 17.* וְיַרְשָׁו כִּי אֲנִי הַבָּחָר וְנָרָתֵן: These terrible afflictions, which will reveal God's sovereign discipline that is meted out equally to all those who need it, (see our commentary on Chapter 5,15) will eventually result in Philistia's rehabilitation. Perhaps this moral rebirth will even come to Philistia earlier than to the other nations (see Verse 14). For in Zechariah 9,7 the

mands of fury, and they will recognize that I am He, as I retaliate against them.

**Chap. 26.** 1. It was in the eleventh year, on the first of the

בתוכחות חמה וירעו כירני  
ויה בתי אתנומתי בס: ס

כו ווועי בעשטייעשנה שנעה

Philistines are singled out from among the other nations by the wonderful promise that Philistia will "be a remnant for our God and he shall be as a chief in Judah."

**Chapter 26.** The dating in this verse is strangely incomplete. The number of the year is followed directly by the words **באחר לחודש** but the name of the month is not given. According to ירושלמי עניית פיר הלכה ה', the date is the ninth of Av, the day on which the Sanctuary went up in flames, and this was a case of קלקול שבנות; i.e., that the Prophet's shock and distress caused him to lose count of his dates. The Sages make their point with the following analogy: "A king is working on his account when he suddenly receives word that his son has been taken captive. The shock causes the king to lose track of his figures, and so he starts all over again with an arbitrary date."

Thus the words **באחר לחודש** reflect Ezekiel's shock at the news of the catastrophe which has befallen his homeland and of which he first hears through the Word of God. At the same time, however, we are given to understand that this ninth day of Av was to mark a new beginning for Ezekiel and his mission.

This might also be the reason why the Prophet (in Chapter 33, Verse 21) refers to the fifth day of Teveth, the day on which the fugitive brought the tragic news to the *golah*, as having occurred during "the twelfth year of our exile." It is reasonable to assume that the fugitive had brought the news during the same (twelfth) year (**ראש השנה יה: דש' בדרא ואשון**); however, the destruction of Jerusalem had taken place during the eleventh year (after Jeconiah's exile). Hence, this would be one more proof that Ezekiel had begun to count for himself the new year starting with the ninth day of Av. In other words, it was not the twelfth year **וילך גלוות הפלך** (as is stated in Chapter 1, Verse 2) but only according to Ezekiel's personal calculation.

It was on the ninth day of Av that Ezekiel uttered his prophecies concerning Tyre (see Chapter 28, Verse 18 and our commentary, *ibid.*). The refugee who was to bring the terrible news from Jerusalem to the *golah* had not yet come. But Ezekiel had known about these tragic developments long before. He

month, when the Word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, because Tyre has exclaimed "Aha" over Yerushalayim, she is broken, she who aspired to be the gateways of

בְּאַתֶּר לְחֹרֶשׁ הָיָה רַבְדִּיתָנוּ  
אֵלִי לְאָמָר:

בָּנָּאָרֶם מִן אֲשֶׁר־אָכְרָה  
אֶרְדָּעַלְיוֹנָשָׁלֵם הַאֲחֵשְׁבָּרָה

knew exactly when they would come to pass and he was already able to hear in advance the shout of malicious glee rising from the mighty centers of commerce by the sea at the news that Jerusalem, their rival, had fallen.

Verse 2. תְּמִימָה reflects Tyre's relief at the news that Jerusalem had fallen. Unlike Ammon (see Chapter 25, Verse 3), Tyre would have had no objections to a state of Judah which was content to live quietly for the values symbolized by its Sanctuary, a state in which the "soil of Israel" would have served the development of Judah's own unique ideals. Jerusalem, the city of the spirit, and Tyre, the city of commerce, could then have existed side by side as the best of friends. But Tyre could not accept the idea that Jerusalem should aspire to become the "gateways of the nations" in every respect. Now Jerusalem was broken, bereft of her cherished independence. נִסְבָּה אֲלִי (*niph'al* of סִבְבָּה): Jerusalem would have to be content if she were granted a modest little space beneath the shade of the center of international commerce that Tyre wanted to be. "I will satisfy myself since she is the one that has been destroyed!" O foolish Tyre! Did she really think she would be able to succeed permanently where Jerusalem had failed? Only those political entities that seek a union of power and spirit, or, more accurately, only such power as can be subordinated to the standards set by God, have the Divine assurance of eternal prosperity. As long as this ideal is not realized, the profound statement uttered by the Sages (וְמִגְילָה וְמִשְׁעָרָה) in connection with אֲמֻלָּתָה וְחַרְבָּה will apply: "If you should hear that both Jerusalem and Caesarea have been destroyed, or that both of them are flourishing, do not believe it. But if you should hear that Caesarea has been destroyed and Jerusalem is flourishing, or that Jerusalem has been destroyed and Caesarea is flourishing, such tidings you may believe." For the two were still irreconcilable rivals: on the one side, a state that saw its greatness in the values of the spirit and of morality which alone make man truly human, and on the other side, a state that perceived its greatness in terms of cunning and material power. One of these two would always be mightier than the other. The balance would keep shifting between לְמִזְמָרָה. Indeed, "all of history is nothing but a struggle between the spirit and the sword, or, as the Sages put

nations—now she will have to turn to Me, I shall gain while she is the devastated one:

3. Therefore, thus spoke my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I shall turn against you, Tyre, and lead numerous people up against you, as the ocean raises up its waves.

4. And they destroy the walls of Tyre and tear down her towers, and I will sweep the dust of rubble off her and turn her into a barren, rocky hill.

5. She will be a site for spreading nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken—pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice; she will become a spoil to the nations.

6. Her daughters on the field will be murdered by the sword,

רְלָתֹות הַעֲמִים נִסְבָּה אֶל  
אַמְלָאָה הַחֲרֵבָה:

כִּי בָּנָה אָמָר אָרוֹן יְהוָה הַגָּנוּ  
עַלְיוֹךְ צָר וְהַשְׁלִיטֵיכְעַלְיוֹךְ גּוֹיִם רַבִּים  
כְּהַעֲלוֹת הַסְּפָרִים לְגַלְיוֹן:

דַּוְשַׁתְּחַווֹת חֲמוֹת צָר וְהַרְסָה  
מְגֻרְלִיתָה וְסְמִיטִיתָה עַפְרָה מְמָנָה  
וְעַתְּחַטְּאָה אָוֹתָה לְצִחְיָה קָלָעָה:

הַסְּמָלָה תְּרָקִים תְּהִיה בְּתַחַת  
הַסְּמָלָה בַּי אָנָי רַבְּרַתִּי נָאָם אָרוֹן  
יְהוָה וְהַוְתָּה לְבָז לְגַוִּים:

וְבְּנָוֹתֶיהָ אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׂרָה בְּחַרְבָּה

it, a contest to determine who shall prevail: Jerusalem or Caesarea" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 25,29). Tyre, too, would have to learn this lesson.

*Verse 3.* The nations and the sea are at the service of Tyre. But at a signal from God a wave of hostile armies will go forth to do battle with her and the waves of the sea will wash her away (see Verse 19). According to tradition, the fall of Tyre had been caused in part by the rising tides of the sea (Rashi, ibid.).

*Verses 4–5.* After the enemies have broken the might of Tyre, סְחַתִּי (*תְּמַטֵּה*=“to sweep away”) the tides of the sea will wash away the ruins and only a barren, naked rock will remain (see Chapter 24, Verse 7) from which poor fishermen will pursue their meager catch. Such will be the end of that mighty metropolis of Tyre which had been built upon an island from where she had cast out her nets to capture the whole world. Who would have believed such tidings if they had not been uttered by God Himself? כִּי אָמַר דָּבָרִי נָאָם ذָה אָרוֹן.

*Verse 6.* Even though they are in the open field, the “daughter cities” of

and they will recognize that I am  
הִנֵּה

7. For thus has spoken my Lord, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I shall bring against Tyre, Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, from the north, the king of kings, with horses and chariots, a company, that is a numerous people.

8. Your daughters in the field he murders by the sword; and he erects battlements against you, puts up ramparts against you and sets up the shield against you.

9. He attaches his battering rams to your walls and with his weapons he tears down your towers.

10. The dust of the multitude of horses will cover you, your walls shake from the uproar of riders, wheels and chariots—when he forces his way into your gates—as

תַּהְרֹגֶנָה וַיַּרְא שׁוֹרְאָנוּ וְרוֹהָה:

7. קַיְ בָּה אָמַר אֲרֹנִי יְהוָה הָנָנִי  
מִכְּבָא אַלְצָר נְבוּכְדְּרָאָצָר מֶלֶךְ  
בְּכָל מִצְפָּן מֶלֶךְ מְלִכִּים בְּסֻסָּם  
וּבְרַכְבָּזְבָּרְשִׁים וּקְתָלָל וּמְסִירָב:

8. בְּנוֹתָיךְ בָּשָׂרָה בְּחַרְבָּה וּבְרַגְגָה  
וְנִתְנוּ עַלְיוֹן דָּןָק וּשְׁפָד עַלְיוֹר סְלָלה:  
וְהַקּוּם עַלְיוֹר צְנָה:

9. וּמְתַחַי קְבָלוּ יְמִינָה בְּחוּמוֹתִיךְ  
וּמְגַנְּלָתִיךְ יְתַחַן בְּחַרְבּוֹתִיךְ:

10. מִשְׁפָעַת סּוֹסִיּוֹ יְכַפֵּךְ אַבָּקָם  
מִקְולָה פָּרָשׁ וּגְלָלָה וּרְכָבָה  
תְּרַעַשָּׁה חֻמוֹתִיךְ בְּלָאוֹ

Tyre think they will be protected by Tyre's walls. But they are mistaken; they, too, will fall victim to the sword.

*Verse 7.* Even the "king of kings" [i.e., Nebuchadnezzar] was only a servant, doing the bidding of God (Jeremiah 25.9).

*Verse 8.* The wide-open "daughter cities" will be the first to fall. Tyre, on the other hand, will go through a siege, and the highly sophisticated siegeworks of her enemies will overcome even the obstacles placed in their way by a walled island city such as Tyre. תְּזַעַר: to protect the city from enemy missiles (see Malbim).

*Verse 9.* The expression טַח קְבָלוּ is difficult to interpret. According to רְדִיק טַח is synonymous with נְגַד and מִכְה with קְבָל. גַּד is a weapon designed to work "against" (this is the meaning of נְגַד) the walls of the enemy city, to "strike down" the walls; i.e., a "battering ram."

*Verse 10.* These are horrifying metaphors describing the overwhelming power of the enemy. We already see his troops pouring through the gates of

in the entrances of a conquered city.

**11.** With the hoofs of his horses he tramples all your streets; your people he slays with the sword, and the monuments of your might shall sink down to earth.

**12.** And they loot your wealth and rob your merchandise, break down your walls and raze the houses of your delight, and your stones, your boards and your dust they submerge in the water.

**13.** And I will cause the multitude of your songs to cease, and the sound of your harps will no longer be heard.

**14.** I reduce you to a barren rock, a site for spreading nets you will be, you will be built no more, for I, ה' have spoken, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God. Who envelops His loving kindness in justice.

the city whose fortified walls had just begun to tremble from the force of the onslaught.

*Verse 11.* singular and feminine, refers to both and **עַת**: Along with the monuments built to symbolize its power, the city, too, has been reduced to ruins forever.

*Verse 12.* This conquest (Verses 8–11) has been the achievement of the "king of kings," hence the use of the singular form in that account. But the looting and destruction were left to the king's men; hence the change to the plural (**וְשָׁבֶת**).

*Verse 13.* All is silent now in this once happy, bustling city (Isaiah 23:7).

*Verse 14.* Only fishermen, spreading out their nets, are left. This scene (first described in Verse 5) is so poignant that the Prophet cannot help describing it here again. **לֹא תִהְיֶה עוֹד**: Even if another Tyre were to arise, it could never match the power of the ancient city that now rests forever at the bottom of the sea.

בשעריך במבואיך עיר מבקעה:

11. בפרקנות סופיו ירמם את  
כל-חוצותיך עפק בחרב יהרג  
ומצבות עז לא רץ תבר:

12. ושללו חילך ובזוזו רבלטך  
והרסו חומותיך ובתני חקלתך  
ויתכו ואכנו וציך ועפיך בתוך  
ימים ישיכו:

13. והשבתי הטע שיריך וכול  
כגוריך לא ישבע עוד:

14. ונתקהיך לצוחה פלע משטה  
בררים תהיה לא תבנה עוז  
כי אני והוה רבדתי נאם ארני  
יורה:

15. Thus spoke of Tyre my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Distant islands will tremble from the uproar of your downfall, when the slain moan and slaughter is rampant in your midst.

16. And all the princes of the sea descend from their thrones and remove their royal robes and take off their embroidered garments; they clothe themselves in panic, sit on the ground and tremble in anticipation of the coming moment—and are terror-stricken at your sight.

17. And they raise the lament over you and say to you: How could you perish, you who are inhabited by seafaring men, the glorified city whose strength was through the sea, she and her inhabitants who inflicted their crushing terror on the entire population.

18. Now they tremble, the dis-

15. כִּי כֹה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה לְצֹר  
בַּלְעָד מִקְול מְפֻלְתָּך בָּאָנָק חֶלְל  
בְּהַרְגָּנָה בְּתוֹכְך יְרַעֲשׁוּ הָאָיוֹם:

16. וְגַרְגָּרוּ מַעַל בְּסָקוֹתָם כָּל נְשִׂיאָיו  
הַלִּים וְהַסְּפוּרָה אֶת־מְעִילֵיכֶם וְאַתָּה  
בְּגַנְבָּיו רְקַפְתֶּם וְפָשַׁטוּ חַרְרוֹתָיו  
יְלַבְשׁוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ יִשְׁבּוּ וְחַרְדוּ  
לְרַגְנָעִים וְשִׁמְפָכוּ עַלְיהָ:

17. וְגַנְשָׂאוּ עַלְיךָ קִינָה וְאָמְרוּ לְךָ  
אַיר אֲבָרָת נְשַׁבְתָּ מִינִימִים הָעִיר  
הַהְלָלָה אֲשֶׁר רְוִיתָ חַזְקָה בְּיָם  
הָיָה וְוַשְׁבִּיהָ אֲשֶׁר־נִתְּנַתָּנָה חַטִּים  
לְכָל־יֹשְׁבִּיהָ:

18. עַתָּה יִחְרְנוּ הַיּוֹם יְמִין

*Verses 15 ff.* And now the Word of God describes the impact the fall of Tyre will have on the rest of the ancient world. The whole world will be shaken and the princes who rule the seas and who had come to accept Tyre as their undisputed mistress will be momentarily (לְרִגְשִׁיט) caught off balance. Following a sudden impulse they will cast off their royal robes and descend from their thrones. Now that Tyre has fallen, do they fear that their own power, too, will soon be at an end? גַּרְגָּג, passive, *niph'al*, substantive: the act of murder.

*Verses 17–18.* A groan rises from deep within their hearts: If Tyre could fall, what other ruler could still feel secure in his power? נְשַׁבְתָּ מִינִימִים: Tyre had been populated by the seas; all the maritime nations had dwelt within her. They had sought her out (Chapter 27) and felt secure in her shelter. Thus we also understand (in a narrower meaning) הַיּוֹם as distinct from הַיּוֹם רַשְׁבִּיהָ:

tant islands, on the day of your downfall, and the distant islands in the sea are thrown into confusion by your departure.

19. For thus has spoken my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: When I make you into a devastated city like the cities which are not inhabited; when I bring the flood over you and the abundant waters cover you,

20. And I lower you to [join] those who are destined to sink into the grave, [to join] many an eternal people, and I cause you to dwell in the land of lowest depth, joining the debris of an eternal past and those who are destined to sink into the grave, so that you shall no more be inhabited—so I shall bestow beauty upon the land of the living.

21. I will abandon you to a fleeting existence and you will be no more—you will be sought

Tyre had made all of them her inhabitants; she had known how to frighten them into continued dependence on her.

קַאֲנִי (as distinct from הָאֵיִם later in the same verse): Perhaps this difference in spelling is meant to indicate the full extent of their consternation that made them despair of their own survival. (ןְאָנִי = "nothingness"; נְאָן = "where?")

*Verses 19–21.* But one final word affords us an insight into the objectives of Divine Providence (הָאֵיִם) which the destruction of Tyre is to help bring about. The stress is on בָּאָרֶץ חַיִים (Verse 20). All that has gone before leads to this objective.

כְּנֻסְרֹתָנוּ: While Arz Israel lay in ruins, its once populous cities deserted (see Chapter 12, Verse 20 and Jeremiah 22,6), Tyre thought she could "satisfy herself since she [i.e., Jerusalem] is the one that has been destroyed" (Verse 2). But in reality Tyre is one of the powers which had long been marked for destruction by Divine decree. God permitted her, temporarily, "to spread terror

מְפֹלֶתֶךְ וְגַבְהַלְוָה הָאֵיִם אֲשֶׁר־  
בְּנֵם מִצְאָתֶךְ:

19. קַיְכָה אָמַר אֶלְנִי וְלוֹהֵב תְּתִתִּי  
אַתְּךָ עִיר נִחְרַבְתָּ בְּעָרִים אֲשֶׁר־  
לְאָדָנוֹשָׁבוּ בְּהַעֲלוֹת עַלְךָ אַתְּ  
תְּרוֹם וְכַסְפּוֹד נִפְמִים הַרְבִּים:

20. וְהַוְרְדַתִּיךְ אֶת־יֹרְדִי בָּורָאֵל  
עִם עַלְםָם וְהַשְׁבְּתִיךְ בָּאָרֶץ  
תְּחִתִּיותָכָה כְּחַרְבּוֹת מְעוּלָם אֲתָךְ־  
יֹרְדִי בָּורָלְמַעַן לֹא תָשַׁבְיִוְתְּתִי  
אֲכִי בָּאָרֶץ חַיִים:

21. בְּלֹהֵות אַתְּךָ וְאַינְךָ וְתַבְקַשְׁ:

but you will not be found into eternity—pronouncement by my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 27.** 1. And the Word of God came to me:

"in the land of life" (Verse 17; cf. Chapter 32, Verse 23) so that she might come to believe she would endure forever. This would make the impact of her eventual downfall even more shocking. (בְּלֹה, Verse 21, from בָּלָה; see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 73,19). The fall of powers such as Tyre should be devastating proof that no ambitions founded on the unbounded worship of power can long endure.

Once in her grave, Tyre will find herself in the company of many nations that had thought they could live forever (עַם עוֹלָם) and had come to their senses only when the silent tomb closed over them for all time. Tyre is only one more addition to the חֲרֵבּוֹת מִעוּלָם, the ruins symbolizing the chastisement God always inflicts upon the powers in history that refuse to recognize Him. Their place is תְּהִוָּת (for בָּאָרֶץ תְּהִוָּת, see Psalms 88,7). By the example of her own downfall, Tyre, along with all the powers that have gone to their grave before her and those that will yet follow her (see the moving description in Chapter 32, Verses 22 ff.), will help hasten the day when the standards that God wishes to see Israel exemplify in its Holy Land will be accepted by all mankind. It is in this context that the Sages equate אָרֶץ חַיִם with אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

This victory of God's Law צְבֵי לְדוֹיִק was the theme of the Prophet's profound song (Isaiah 24,16). This chapter in the Book of Isaiah, too, follows upon it.

**פסא צוֹר:** Tyre's might will vanish without a trace, but the devastated cities and the deserted ruins of Judah will rise again (Chapter 36, Verse 10) because Israel has been and will endure forever (*Yalkut*).

**Chapter 27.** But Ezekiel would not have been, בֶן אָדָם, the "son of mankind," qualified to show new paths of life to all humanity, if the downfall of mighty Tyre had not drawn from him a heart-stirring lament. Had all this power and glory been achieved at such great cost only to be swept away in an instant by the waves of the raging sea? When our Sages said that "unlike the prophets of other nations who concerned themselves only with the fate of their compatriots, the prophetic spirit of Israel serves the purposes of God's

2. But as for you, son of mankind, raise a lamentation for Tyre.

וְאַתָּה בָּנוֹ אֶרְם שָׂא עַל־צֵר  
קִנְחָה:

3. And say to Tyre, which is dwelling at the entries to the sea and is the middleman in the commerce of the nations with the many remote lands far from the sea: Thus has my Lord said, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Tyre, you have said: 'Here I am (standing) in the perfection of beauty!'

וְאָמַרְתָּ לְצֹר הַיְשָׁבָתִי עַל־  
מִכּוֹאָת יְם רַכְלָת הָעָמִים אֶל־  
אֲיָם רְבִים בָּה אָמַר אַרְנֵי בָּרוּה  
צֹר אַת אָמְרָת אֲנִי בְּלִילָת יוֹפִי:

4. Your territories lie in the heart of the seas; your builders shaped your beauty to perfection.

4. בְּלֵב נְפָום גְּבוּלָיך בְּנֵיך פְּלָלוּ  
יְפִינָה:

5. Of fir trees from Senir did they build for you all the planks; they took cedarwood from Lebanon to erect the mast within you.

5. בְּרוּשָׁם מִשְׁנֵיר בְּנֵולֶד אַת בְּלַל  
לְחוּתִים אָרוּ מַלְכָנוּן לְקָחוּ לְעַשׂוֹת  
תָּרֻן עַלְיהָ:

הישכת קרי.

compassion for Israel and for all the other nations," they were thinking of Ezekiel's lament at the fall of Tyre (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 22,8)

*Verse 3.* The Prophet contemplates Tyre whose geographic location had provided the most favorable conditions for that city to become the center of the mercantile nations of the ancient world (for רַכְלָת, see Chapter 17, Verse 4). Believing that she had attained the pinnacle of perfection, Tyre forgot that this is the source of such perfection (see our commentary, Chapter 16, Verse 14).

*Verse 4.* Since the high seas had become her realm and nations far and near vied with one another to contribute to her success and her perceived beauty. Tyre thought she no longer needed God. Tyre, the proudest, most splendid "ship" of them all, seemed to lack for nothing.

If we knew more about the attitude the nations named in the verses that follow had adopted toward Tyre, we would be able to obtain a more detailed picture of Tyre's central position of power in the ancient world. For our purposes, however, it should suffice to know that all the treasures and resources of the ancient world had been gathered to help build the proud "ship" that was the city of Tyre.

*Verse 5.* שְׁנֵיר is Hermon (Deuteronomy 3,9).

6. Of oak trees from Bashan  
did they fashion your oars, your  
rudders of cedarwood covered  
with ivory, from the distant isles  
of the Kittites.

7. Of colorfully embroidered  
linen from Mitzrayim was your  
sail and [it] served you as an em-  
blem; of sky-blue and red purple  
from Elisha's distant isles was the  
cover of your tent.

8. The inhabitants of Sidon and  
Arvad served you as oarsmen;  
your wise men, Tyre, were within  
you; they were your sailors.

9. The elders of Geval and its  
sages were united together within  
you; they repaired your breaches  
for you; all the ships of the sea  
and their seamen were with you  
and served you as security.

אלוּגִים מְבָשֵׂן עַשְׂוֹ מִשׁׁׁוֹמֵד  
קְרֶשֶׁךְ עֲשֹׂוֹשָׁנָ בְּתִ-אֲשָׁרִים  
מְאַנֵּי פְּתִים:

שְׁשָׁ-בְּרַקְמָה מְפִצְרִים הַנִּהְ  
סְפִרְשֵׁךְ לְהִוָּת לְךָ לְגַם תְּכִלָּתָ  
וְאַרְגְּמָן מְאַנֵּי אַלְיָשָׁה הַנִּהְ מְכַפֵּה:

וְשְׁבַּי צִידָן וְאַרְוֹד הַיְוָשְׁטִים לְךָ  
תְּכִמֵּיךְ צָרֵךְ קְרֵךְ הַמָּה חֲבֵלִיהָ:

זְקִנֵּי גְּבֵל וְחַקְמִיתָ קְיִי בְּךָ  
סְחַווִּיקָ בְּרַקָּךְ בְּלִיאָנִיותָ הַיָּם  
וּסְלִיחִים הַיְוָי בְּךָ לְעַרְבָּבָ מְעַרְבָּה:

בְּתִים קְרִי.

*Verse 6.* משׁוֹם, derived from שׁוֹם, "to swim." According to Rashi, קְרֶשֶׁךְ, a singular form, is a rudder. The meaning of בְּתִ-אֲשָׁרִים is uncertain; according to Rashi, it is synonymous with נְאָשָׁה (Isaiah 41,19), a kind of cedar.

*Verse 7.* מְבָשֵׂן-לְבָטָח (מְבָשֵׂן נָס is "to spread out"); Waving proudly in the breeze, the sails of the "ship" that was Tyre also served as a highly visible emblem (סְפִרְשָׁה) of the city's greatness. מְכַחָה is a tentlike awning spread over the deck of a ship. וּבְנֵי אַלְיָשָׁה (see Genesis 10,4: וּבְנֵי אַלְיָשָׁה) probably denotes a coastal area of ancient Greece.

*Verse 8.* Sidon, too (see Chapter 28, Verse 1), was subservient to Tyre. אַרְוֹד, see Genesis 10,18. The "wise men" of Tyre (Chapter 28, Verses 3 ff.) piloted the "ship."

*Verse 9.* גְּבֵל denotes skilled architects (see I Kings 5,32). For לְאָנוֹת בְּלִי see I Kings 5,32. מְפִרְכָּה: לְשֻׁרְבָּה is probably synonymous with טְבַנָּה, "pledge," "pawn," or "security." All the ships of the sea and the crews that manned them served as security for Tyre; they enabled her to gain credit everywhere, on the most generous terms.

**10.** Persians, Lud and Phut were in your army, men that waged your wars for you; shield and helmet did they hang up within you; [it was] they that brought you glory.

**11.** The sons of Arvad and your army upon your walls round about, Gammadim [were] in your towers; they hung their shields upon your ramparts round about; [it was] they that perfected your beauty.

**12.** Tarshish was your merchant, from the abundance of every sort of wealth, of silver, iron, tin and lead; they amassed it within you.

*Verses 10–11.* Tyre could face every threat unafraid. She won every war. Mercenaries willingly came from the east (Persia) and the west (Phut and Lud—Egypt) to fight in her battles. All of them were proud to have their shields shine from the battlements of Tyre and happy to be able to add to her power. According to Rashi and Radak, נְמִידִים are (possibly African) pygmy tribes; וַיָּמֹד is "to shrink."

תְּהִמָּה נָתַנְתָּה הַדָּרֶךְ – הַמָּה כָּלְלִי יִפְאַךְ. What, then, did Tyre still lack to perfect her beauty? To answer this question, consider what Ezekiel once said concerning the beauty of the people of Israel: יִשְׂצַח כִּי כָלֵיל הַיָּא בָּהֲרֵרִי (see our commentary, Chapter 16, Verse 14).

*Verses 12–25* afford a panoramic view of all the nations that traded with Tyre. Tyre dominated the whole Mediterranean basin. Her merchants were princes and her tradesmen "the honorable of the earth" (Isaiah 23,8).

Here, again, we not only lack familiarity with the nations concerned but also have insufficient knowledge of the pertinent ideas constantly repeated in our text; as a result, we cannot discuss in detail the political and economic policies followed by these nations toward Tyre. We accept the interpretation given by Malbim, according to whom סחר is a wholesale merchant; a middleman; עובן merchandise that has been "left behind" and warehoused; and טערבה is the collateral against which the traders obtained the merchandise they planned to sell.

ט. פָּרָם וְלֻוָּר וְסִוטָּה הַיּוֹ בְּחִילָּג  
אָנְשֵׁי מִלְחָמָתָה קָנוּ וְכָבוּעַ תָּלוּ  
בָּרֶךְ הַפְּהָה נָתַנְתָּה בְּרַכָּה:

י. בְּנֵי אַרְבָּר וְחִילָּג עַל־חוּמוֹתָיוֹ  
סְכִיבָּן וְגִנְפָּרִים בְּמִגְנָרְלָתוֹתָיוֹ הַיּוֹ  
שְׁלַטְתֵּיכֶם תָּלוּ עַל־חוּמוֹתָיוֹ סְכִיבָּן  
הַמָּה בְּלָלְוָיְפָנָה:

ט. תְּרִשְׁוֵשׁ סְחַרְפָּךְ מֶרְכָּב כָּל־הָזָן  
בְּכַסְפָּךְ בְּרִזְלָבְרִיל וְעוֹפָרָת נָתַנְתָּה  
עֲוֹכְבָּנִיהָ:

**13.** Yavan, Tuval and Meshech, they were your traders; in human souls and copper vessels they gave you your guarantee.

**14.** From the house of Togarmah: steeds, war horses and mules did they amass within you.

**15.** The sons of Dedan were your traders: (they exported) to the many lands far from the sea the merchandise (amassed) beneath your hand; elephants' tusks and ebony did they bring back to you as tribute.

**16.** By reason of your many actions Aram was the merchant dependent on you: nophech, purple wool, richly embroidered work and fine linen, corals and rubies did they amass within you.

13. גָּנוּ חַבֵּל וְמִשְׁרֶךָ הַמָּה רְכָלִיר  
בְּגַנְפֵשׁ אֲדָם וְכָלִי נְחַשְׁתָּנָה  
מְעַרְבָּה:

14. מִבֵּית תִּונְגְּמָה סְופִים  
יִפְרַשִּׁים וּפְרָדוִים נְתַנְּנָה עֹזְבּוֹנוֹה:

15. בְּנֵי דְּרוֹן רְכָלוֹר אַיִם רְבִים  
סְחֻרָת יְבַדְּ קְרֻנוֹת שָׁוֹן וְרוּבָנִים  
הַשְׁיבָּו אַשְׁכָּרָה:

16. אֲדָם סְפַרְתָּח מִרְכָּב מַעֲשֵׂיךְ  
בְּגַנְפֵר אַרְגְּמָנוֹן רְקָמָה יְבוֹזָן רְאַמָּת  
וּכְרָפֵר נְתַנְּנָה בְּעֹזְבּוֹנוֹה:

והבניהם קרי.

*Verses 12–13.* Though Tarshish herself was an important, wealthy seaport on the west coast of the Mediterranean, she regarded herself as a mere סחרה (note the feminine form), a lesser maritime power in comparison with Tyre, where she deposited her treasures. This merchandise was turned over to Yavan, Tuval and Meshech [nations descended from Noach's son Yaphet], who acted as middlemen to distribute it against a collateral of slaves and copper vessels. Tyre was not above using human lives for financial gain. In Joel 4,6 we are given a crass example of Tyre's ruthless practices in these dealings.

*Verses 14–15.* דְּרוֹן, חַוְרָה: see Genesis 10, 3–4. Dedan distributed the merchandise that had been piled up in the warehouses of Tyre (צָחָרָת) and, in return, supplied Tyre's markets with choice products from distant lands. שְׁוֹן are elephants' tusks that are shaped like "horns". נְבָנִים is ebony (Gesenius: *hebenum*). אַשְׁכָּר "may be related to שָׁר, the Rabbinic term for 'sending.' " (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 72,10).

*Verse 16.* See Verse 12; מַשְׁׁנָץ, see Jeremiah 48,7. נַף is a precious stone (Exodus 28,18). נְהָרָה are corals (?). To understand the order in which the various products are named here would require an exact knowledge of the terms used.

17. Judah and the land of Israel, they were your traders; in wheat from Minnith, perfumed wood, honey, oil and balsam did they give your pledges.

18. By reason of your many actions Damesek was the merchant dependent on you; from an abundance of every sort of wealth (did he contribute), of wine from chelbon and shimmering wool.

19. Vedan and Yavan from Uzal amassed [their goods] within you; wrought iron, cassia and calamus were deposited with you as security.

20. Dedan became the merchant dependent on you in elegant clothes for riding.

21. Arabia and all the princes of Kedar were merchants subject to

17. וְהוֹרָה וְאֶרְץ יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמִּתְּהִרְבֶּת  
רְכָלִיךְ בְּחַטִּי מִנִּית וְפָנָג וּרְבָשׁ  
וּשְׁמָן וְצָרִי נְתַנְנוּ מַעֲרְבָּה:

18. רְמַשְׁק סְחַרְתָּךְ בְּרֵב מַעֲשֵׂיךְ  
מַרְבֵּב בְּלִיהְוֹן בְּנֵיו חַלְבָּן וְאַמְרָר  
אֶחָר:

19. וְבוּ וְנוּן מַאוֹל בְּעֻזּוּבָנִיר גַּתְנָה  
בְּרִיל עֲשָׂות קָנָה וְקָנָה בְּמַעֲרָבָה  
הַוְהָה:

20. דְּרוֹן רְכָלִתָּךְ בְּבָנְרִידְחָפֵש  
לְרִכְבָּה:

21. עֲרָב וּכְלִנְשִׂיאוֹ קָרֵר הַמִּתְּהִרְבֶּת

*Verse 17.* Note the modest role to which "the land of Judah and Israel" had been assigned. According to Rashi, מִנִּית is a city known for the superior quality of its wheat. פָנָג, see Rashi.

*Verse 18.* According to Malbim, the words גַּתְנָה עֻזּוּבָנִיר are omitted in this verse because Tyre kept these products for her own domestic needs. חַלְבָּן is the name of a locality. צָרָר probably denotes a shimmering white (see Judges 5,10).

*Verse 19.* Vedan was a tribe or a people. יְהָן מַאוֹל, as distinct from יְהָן in Verse 13 (see Genesis 10,27): the merchandise they stored was used, at the same time, as collateral for obtaining other goods. עֲשָׂות is a massive metal. (For a conceptual explanation, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 146,4).

*Verse 20.* דְּרוֹן—identical with chapter 25, Verse 13; not synonymous with the דְּרוֹן named in Verse 15 (see Genesis 10,7 and 25,3). Dedan was only רְכָלִתָּךְ (as implied by the feminine form); she did not have much to offer. שָׁמָן, lit., "free," "independent," meaning "distinguished."

*Verse 21.* The concept of dependence which, in the case of the other nations, is denoted by סְחַרְתָּךְ (see Verse 12) is given added emphasis in this

your authority, [dealing] in lambs, rams and goats; in these [goods] were they your merchants.

22. The traders from Sheba and Ra'amah, they were your traders; the choicest of every kind of spice, all kinds of precious stones and gold did they amass with[in] you.

23. Charan and Caneh and Eden, the traders of Sheba, Ashur, Kilmad, your humble trader:

24. They became your traders when they brought to your market perfect goods; cloaks of purple and embroidered material, treasures of colorfully embroidered cloth and firmly twisted cord.

25. The ships of Tarshish served

סְחָרֵי וּבָדֶ בְּכָרִים וְאַיִלִים  
וְעַתְוֹרִים בָּם סְחָרִיה:

22. רְכָלִי שְׁבָא וְרַעֲמָה הַמָּה  
לְכָלִיד בְּלָאש בְּלַבְשָׂם וּבְכָלָל-  
אָנוּ יְקָרָה וְזָהָב נְתַנְנוּ עֲזֹבּוֹגָה:

23. חָמֵן וְכָנֵה וְעַדְן רְכָלִי שְׁבָא  
אֲשֻׁור בְּלַמְדָר רְכָלִתָּה:

24. הַמָּה רְכָלִיר בְּמַכְלָלִים  
בְּגַלְוֹטוֹ תְּכִלָּת וְרַקְמָה וּבְגַנְגָּנוּ  
בְּרַקְמִים בְּחַכְלִים חַבְשִׁים וְאַרְזִים  
בְּמַרְכְּלָתָה:

25. אֲגִינָּות תְּרַשִּׁישׁ שְׁרוֹתִיךְ

verse, since the Prophet is now discussing the "princes" of Kedar. Even though they seemed to be **טהורי ירך** (note the masculine form, implying strength and power), they were merely

*Verse 22.* The proud traders of Sheba, who were accustomed to have the traders call on them at their headquarters (*Verse 23*), were willing to visit Tyre in order to store their merchandise there.

*Verses 23–24.* Trading nations who were received in Sheba as respected merchants (**רְכָלִי שְׁבָא**) felt almost poverty-stricken (**רוֹכְלָח**) when they paid their first visit to the international trading center of Tyre. Only after they had placed all their goods on that market (**טוֹרְכָה**) were they looked upon as respected merchants. **הַמָּה רְכָלִיר**: something "completed," "perfected" (see Chapter 23, Verse 12). They placed exquisite wares upon the market. **גַּלְוֹטָה**, the Rabbinic term is a "cloak" or "garment," (see Psalms 139,16 and גַּלְוָתָה). **שְׁבָתָה צְוָה**: are treasures. According to **רְרִיךְ** and other commentators (see Gesenius), **בְּרַמִּים** is a many-colored fabric used for clothing. (Perhaps **בְּרַם** is related to **טְרַמָּה**, "to tear;" in that case the material would be described as interwoven with varicolored threads). **תְּכִלָּת** is "to twist;" **רַחַץ**, "pulled tightly together" (hence perhaps pointing to the idea of strength and firmness implied in **תְּרַשִּׁישׁ**, "cedar").

*Verse 25.* Ships from Tarshish had to serve as convoys to transport her

you as caravans and as security; and thus were you filled and made very heavy in the heart of the seas.

**26.** Your oarsmen brought you to the high seas; then the east wind broke you in the heart of the seas.

**27.** Your wealth, your amassed goods, your securities, your seamen and your sailors who repaired your breaches for you and served you as security, all the men who waged [your]wars for you and had become united within you, along with all that was gathered within you—these will fall into the heart of the seas on the day of your downfall.

**28.** At the sound of the cry of your sailors, heard even far away, all that is around you will tremble.

**29.** And all those that wield the

מערבה ותמלאי ותכברן מאר  
בלב ימים:

**26.** בימים רביהם היכיאך השטם  
אתך רוח נקרים שברך בלב  
ימים:

**27.** הונך תונכנייך מערבך מליחיך  
ותבליך פחוייך ברוך וערבי  
מערבה וכלאנשי מלחתך  
אשר-ברך ובכל-קלהך אשער  
בתוכך יפלז בלב ימים בויום  
ספלתך:

**28.** לקול יעקט תבליך ירעש  
מנשות:

**29.** וירדו מאנוותיהם כל לפשי

merchandise. (*שורת* is a verbal form of *שור*, the Rabbinic term *שירה* "caravan;" in this instance it may also suggest *שורת*, "to serve").

**תמלאי:** Tyre's aspirations had been fulfilled. She had reached the pinnacle of prosperity. (See *אמלאה*, Chapter 26, Verse 2.) She was in the dual meaning of the expression. She was "heavily" laden with "honors" upon the high seas. It had never occurred to Tyre for a moment that her ship might be overloaded, too heavily laden to remain afloat.

*Verse 26.* Disaster overtook Tyre upon the high seas. The proud ship was smashed by a mighty gale from the east. *רווח הקרים* refers to Nebuchadnezzar, as in Jeremiah 18,17.

*Verse 27.* We behold Tyre in all her glory for one last time before the sea engulfs her forever.

*Verse 28.* The cries of her crewmen, "their wise men" (Verse 8), who had been so sure of their skills as pilots of the ship, can be heard from far away. (*מנשות* (*מנרש*, "precincts," "outskirts") here, corresponding to Chapter 26, Verse 15: *טkol מפלח-ירעשו האים*, "ranging over a wide area.")

*Verse 29.* See Chapter 26, Verse 16; they feel the ground swaying beneath

helm will climb down from their ships, seamen, all pilots of the sea, and they will go ashore.

**30.** And they will raise their voice aloud because of you and they will cry out bitterly; and they will place dust upon their heads and roll themselves in ashes.

**31.** And they will make themselves bald because of you and will gird themselves in sackcloth; they will weep for you with the bitter lament of a bitter soul.

**32.** In their grief they will raise their lamentation on your behalf and lament over you: Who was like Tyre? Who was like her that became a silent grave in the midst of the sea?

**33.** When your amassed goods left the seas, you satisfied many nations; with the abundance of

סְשׁוֹטִים פָּלָחִים כֵּל חַבְלֵי הַיּוֹם אֶל־  
הָאָרֶץ יַעֲמֹדֶה:

**30.** וְהַשְׁמִיכוּ עַלְיָךְ בְּקוּלָם וַיַּזְעֲכוּ  
מְדֻרָה וַיַּצְלַחֲוּ עַפְרָה עַל־גְּאַשְׁיָהָם  
בְּאָסָר יַתְפְּלִשּׁוּ:

**31.** וְהַקְרִיבוּ אֶלְיךָ קְרָחָה וְתַנְרוּ  
שְׁקָרִים וּבְכָיו אֶלְיךָ בְּמַרְגְּנָפָשׁ  
מְסֻפָּר קָרָב:

**32.** וְגַשְׂאֹו אֶלְיךָ בְּנֵיהֶם קִינָה  
וּקְוֹנְנוּ עַלְיָךְ קוֹי בְּצֹר בְּרָקָה בְּתוֹךְ  
הַיּוֹם:

**33.** בְּצֹאת עַזְבּוֹנָר מִפְּתִים  
הַשְּׁפָעָת עַפְמִים רַבִּים בְּבָבָ

them. After such a harrowing experience, who would ever dare go to sea again?

*Verses 30–32.* Their pathetic lamentations are for Tyre's downfall. She had been unique in her greatness (מי נצור) and now she was unique in her ruin (נדסה) (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 23,2) expresses the high position that Tyre had held in their eyes; their bitter weeping speaks louder than words. Only after they have no more tears left will they find words to express their sorrow. נצור, from נצור, "a painful yearning" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 13,17). In the midst of their yearning they become fully aware of what they have lost. וקָרְנוּ עַלְךָ: this is the principal cause of their lamentations. (קון, "the feeling that one has lost a valuable possession," Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 4,2).

רַמָּה is probably a combination of דָּרְמָה; i.e., the "silent" grave (Psalms 94,17) and צָהָר, "to fall silent." Tyre, which had once been "joyous" (Isaiah 23,7) has fallen silent like the silence of the grave.

*Verse 33.* To gain an idea of Tyre's power one need only consider that

your wealth and your securities  
did you enrich kings of the earth.

**34.** Now that you have been broken by the seas in the depths of floods, your last remaining security has gone down along with everything that was gathered within you.

**35.** All the inhabitants of the lands far from the sea are numb with terror at the sight of you; horror seizes their kings; their faces quiver.

**36.** The merchants of the nations mock you; you have become transient and will be no more until eternity.

nations amassed wealth and kings became rich through their dealings with Tyre.

*Verse 34.* But in order to understand the full extent of Tyre's disaster, one must consider that, along with all her other riches, מִעֵדֶן (singular) the whole mass of Tyre's collateral sank to the bottom of the sea.

מִימִים: see Chapter 26, Verse 19.

*Verse 35.* Wherever the news of Tyre's destruction is heard, the reaction will be one of stunned horror. The faces of the people mirror the agitation (רעם) that has taken hold of their souls. שערו שער "their hair stands on end" (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 32.17).

*Verse 36.* But once the initial shock has given way to calmer reflection, a reaction sets in that is surprising but unfortunately characteristic in the history of mankind. The "merchants" (סחרים) who until then were "held down" (note the feminine form of סחרה in Verse 12) by Tyre heave a sigh of relief. As they recall the former greatness of Tyre, they also remember her imperiousness and her lust for power. Those who now have no other ambition but to become powerful, taking the place of Tyre, are thoroughly gratified and have only ridicule (רַק, "to hiss") for her. Like Tyre before them, they, too, now go forth to sea with spanking new sails and with the boastful motto: "I will fill myself since she is the one that has been destroyed" (Chapter 26, Verse 2).

This is a stark example of the evanescence of power—a powerful lesson for mankind (Chapter 26, Verse 21).

הוֹנֵךְ וְמַעֲרֵבֶיךְ הַעֲשָׂרָת מֶלֶכִים

אָרֶץ:

34. עַת נִשְׁבַּרְתְּ מִינִים בְּמַעֲמָקִים

מִים מִעֵדֶן וּכְלַ-קְהָלָד בְּתוֹךְ

גְּנָפָלָה:

35. כָּל יִשְׁבּוּ הָאִים שָׁמָמוּ עַלְכֶךָ

וּמִלְכֵיכֶם שַׁעַר שַׁעַר רַעֲמָמוֹתָנִים:

36. סִחְרִים בְּעַמִּים שָׁרְקָנוּ עַלְכֶךָ

בְּלֹהֲוֹת הַיּוֹת וְאַינְךְ עַד-עוֹלָם: ס

**בְּחָזָקָה וַיֹּאמֶר רַבְּרִיחוּנָה אֱלֹהִים:**  
Chap. 28. 1. And the Word of God came to me:

**בָּנְאָתָם אָמַר לְגִינֵּיד צָר בָּהּ:**  
2. Son of mankind, say to the prince of Tyre (to be a model for

**Chapter 28.** This chapter, which, like the preceding one, recalls the glories of the kingdom of Tyre, seems to reveal the deepest motives for the painful sadness which the Prophet Ezekiel, as בֶּן אָדָם, felt as he contemplated the downfall of this world power. These words are addressed to the king of Tyre (מלך צור) —V.12). The Prophet recalls that majestic personality whose policies had once held out the hope that Tyre's influence and power would help bring the non-Jewish world to recognize and accept the Divine ideals symbolized by Zion. Throughout his life Hiram, king of Tyre, had shown sincere affection for King David (I Kings 5,15: כִּי אֶחֱבָה הַיה חִירּוֹם לְרוֹד כָּל הַיְמִים) and had felt the same affection also for David's son and successor, King Solomon, whose wisdom, nourished by the Divine spirit of the Torah, he respected and admired. The words of this non-Jewish ruler: "God loves His people since He chose you as its king" and "Blessed be God, the God of Israel, Who created heaven and earth" (II Chronicles 2,11) reflect the impact which King David must have had on him and the feelings he had for the Jewish King, of whom Isaiah said: "Behold, I have given him as a witness to the peoples, מִן עַד נָגֵד וּמִצָּה לְאַמּוֹת as a model and bringer of [the precepts of] duty to the nations" (Isaiah 55,4). When we read how Hiram, a non-Jewish king, willingly and happily contributed his skills and his wealth to the construction of the Divine Sanctuary, it almost seems to us as if the Psalm of Assaph (Psalm 76), describing the homage that all the nations will eventually pay to the Sanctuary of God, has Hiram in mind when it concludes with the words: "Far and wide, they [i.e., the nations] will bring tribute to Him, the Awesome One. He gathers in the vintage of the spirit of the princes (רַבָּת נְשִׂיאִים); He is awesome to the kings of the earth." King Hiram seemed to have been chosen as the נגיד (for the explanation of נגיד in the sense of "before" or "opposite," see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 76,13), a shining example to guide his own people, and the rest of the world with them, along the path that leads to the fulfillment of man's true destiny and to the resulting salvation of all mankind. These are the thoughts that must have moved Ezekiel, the בֶּן אָדָם, as he stood at the grave of Tyre's vanished glory. The end of Tyre spelled also the end of the high hopes which Tyre had proven unable to fulfill. It was therefore only natural that Ezekiel, as a בֶּן אָדָם, should have been moved to utter words of heart-stirring lamentation for the king of Tyre.

**Verse 2.** In light of the foregoing we think we understand why the Word of

nations): Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because your heart was lifted up in conceit and you declared: "I am [a] god! I live in a seat of God in the heart of the seas!" yet you are [only] a man and not God, but you set your intent as if it were the intent of God—

3. Look, do you think you are wiser than Daniel? Does not all that is concealed remain obscured from you?

4. And yet [it was] by your wisdom and your understanding [that] you acquired a fortune, amassed gold and silver in your treasure vaults.

אָמַר אֶלְעָנָי יְהוָה נָאֹן גִּבְעָה לְכֶם  
וְתָאָכֵר אֶל אֲנִי מָשָׁבָךְ אֱלֹהִים  
יִשְׂכַּתִּי בְּלֵב יִפְּרָם וְאַתָּה אַתָּה:  
לֹא־אֵל וְתַתְּנוּ לְבָקָע בְּלֵב אֱלֹהִים:

3. הנֶּה חָכָם אָפָה מִרְגָּנָל כָּל-  
סְתֻּhom לֹא עַמְכוּם:

4. בְּחִכְמַתְךָ וּבְתִבְונַתְךָ עִשְׂיוֹת לְךָ  
שִׁיל וְתַעֲשֵׂה זָהָב וְכַסְף בְּאוֹצְרוֹתְךָ:

God had directed the Prophet's thoughts to the **נגיד צור** (King of Tyre). This one word reflects the tendency of the entire chapter.

Alas, the obsession of Hiram's successor with his own glory robbed him of the last trace of the spirit implied by the word **נגיד**. There was no more room in his heart and mind for the God "of heaven and earth." This ruler had become his own god. He regarded the heavens above and the surging sea at his feet as his own property. It was in the midst of the waves that he had built himself a throne (see the splendid description by the Sages in *Yalkut*), from which he, as the self-declared "source of all power" (for **ל**, see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 34,6), imposed his laws upon the whole world, arrogantly recognizing only those laws that he himself had proclaimed. The time had come for **ה** to bring him to his senses, to make him realize that he was not a god but only a mortal man.

**Verse 3.** Why could this ruler not have emulated the spirit of Daniel, from whom truly nothing was concealed but who never failed to look up humbly to God "to Whom all wisdom and power belong" (Daniel 2), even when no less a person than Nebuchadnezzar fell to his knees before him, a mere mortal?

**Verses 4–5.** Tyre's ruler offered a frightening example of the extent to which hubris can degrade a man, so that he no longer heeds the warning against the attitude implied by the words **כִּי תַּעֲשֶׂה לְךָ לֹא תַּחֲלֵל**

5. By the abundance of your wisdom and your transactions did you increase your wealth and because of your fortune did you become arrogant.

6. Therefore, thus said my Lord God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because you set your intent as if it were the intent of God,

7. Therefore will I bring strangers against you, despotic nations; they will draw their swords against the beauty of your wisdom and kill your radiance.

8. They will lower you into the pit and you will die the agonizing death of those slain in the heart of the seas.

9. Will you then still, within sight of your murderer, say: 'I am

5. בָּרוּךְ חִכְמַתְךָ בֶּרֶכְלַתְךָ הַרְבִּית  
חִילָּךְ וַיְגַבֵּהֲ לְגַבֵּעַ בְּחִילָּךְ:

6. לְכֹן בָּהּ אָמַר אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה יְהֻנָּה  
תַּתְּהַאֲתָה לְבַבְךָ בְּלֵב אֱלֹהִים:

7. לְכֹן הַנְּגִינִי מִכְיָא עַלְיָךְ זְרוּם  
עַרְיוֹנִי נָוֵם וַתְּרִיקוּ חַרְבוֹתָם עַל־  
בְּפִי חִכְמַתְךָ וְחַלְלוּ יְסֻחָּךְ:

8. לְשֹׁתָת וּוּרְדוֹת נְפָתָה מִמְּטוֹתִי  
חַלְל בְּלֵב יְמִים:

9. הָאָמַר תֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אַנְּיִי לְפָנָי

(Deuteronomy 8,17). Because this was his attitude, the inevitable result, in his case, too, was אָבֵד תָּאַבְדֵּן (ibid.).

*Verse 7.* Those who carried out God's judgment against Tyre were themselves וּרְאִים, aliens, who had never been inspired in the least by true God-consciousness and who wielded their conquering swords in blatant arrogance.

**יְמִינְתָּךְ:** The spectacular beauty of Tyre's culture lacked the *חֶדֶר* of God (see Chapter 16, Verse 14) because it had ceased to reflect God's wisdom. Therefore שְׂעִירָךְ, too, had been desecrated (*לָלֶל*) long ago, long before it fell to the sword of the triumphant foe. "בָּשָׂר", related to בָּשָׂר, 'to breathe,' and עָשָׂר, 'to radiate.' ... Beauty is interpreted as the uplifting effect that the breath and the radiance of the [truly] 'beautiful' has on the spirit of the beholder" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 39,5). The radiant splendor that emanated from Tyre could have sent the first rays of God-consciousness to a world caught in the darkness of alienation from God (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 33,2, on חֶדֶר פָּנָיךְ).

*Verse 8.* מִתְּהִלָּתָךְ is a plural form as in Jeremiah 16,4.

*Verses 9–10.* At the hour of her death, Tyre finally abandons her delusions

God?" You are only a man and not God in the hand of those that will kill you.

**10.** Even as the unstable have always faded away, so you, too, will die by the hand of strangers, for I have said it—it is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**11.** And the Word of God came to me:

**12.** Son of mankind, take up a lamentation over the king of Tyre and say to him: Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: There was a time when you were called to set your seal upon the measure that is the foundation of all things, replete with wisdom, in consummate beauty.

הַרְגֵּב וְאַתָּה אֶרְךָ וְלֹא־אֶלְךָ בִּנְךָ  
מְחַלְלָךְ:

**10.** מָותִי עֲרָלִים תִּמְוֹת בִּידֵינוּם  
כִּי אַנְיָ רְבָרְתִּי גָּאָס אַרְגְּנוּ יְהֻוָּה ס

**11.** וְיַחַי רְבָרְיְוָה אֶלְיָ לְאָמָר:

**12.** בְּנֵאָדָם שְׁאָ קְוָנָה עַל־מְלָאָ  
צָור וְאָמְרָתָ לֹא כָּה אָמַר אֶרְגָּנָי  
יְהֻוָּה אַתָּה חֹתֶם תִּמְקָנִית מְלָאָ  
שְׁקָפָה וּכְלִיל יְפָי:

of grandeur. **טָהִי עֲרָלִים:** Tyre is overtaken by the fate of all those whose unruly hearts (פָּרָלִי לֵב) have allowed them to lose control over themselves.

But the Prophet is heartsick and moved to utter his sad lamentation.

**Verse 12.** In Chapter 43,10, the term **הַכְּנִית** refers to the physical proportions of the future Sanctuary. The king of Tyre had once assisted in the building of God's Sanctuary. At that time he had considered all of Creation as the work of "the God of heaven and earth." God is the almighty **חָזָק** (see Chapter 18,25 and Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 5,8), the all-powerful "Architect" Who sets His measure for all of His creations (see Psalms 75,4: **אָנָּכִי חָנָנִי פָּסְדִּירָה**) and at Whose service Hiram once placed his own modest skills. **מְקָן** "denotes a weighing and establishment of the [true] proportion of things and of their [true] relationship to one another."

Even as Israel is destined to serve as the seal of God, "certifying" that all the events of history are indeed guided and accomplished by God (see Haggai 2,23: **עַמְּדָה כְּסֵף**, **וְסִטְמָךְ** **בְּמִזְמָרָה**), so Tyre, too, had been chosen to "attest" to the Divine measure on which all of Creation is based (**מְקָן** is a participle) and to open the ears of a heathen world to the Word of God emanating from the harmony

13. You dwelt in the Eden of God's garden, every precious stone covered you: *odem, pitedah* and *yahalom, tarshish, shoham* and *yosheph, saphir, nophech* and *vorakath* and gold—but also the work of your body with its cavities and orifices—from the day of your creation were they prepared.

13. בָּעֵד גַּן־אֱלֹהִים הָיָת בְּלַי־אָבִן וַיָּבֹה טֶפֶכְתָּךְ אֲרֻם פָּטָרָה וַיָּהֶלְסֵתְרָשֵׁישׁ שְׁלָמָן וַיִּשְׁפַּה סָפִיר נְפָךְ וְגַרְקָתְךָ וְזָהָב מְלָאכָת תְּפִיךְ וַיַּגְּבֵרְךָ בְּרוּם הַבָּרוּךְ כּוֹנְנוֹ:

of His Creation. It was for this purpose that God had bestowed on Tyre, and as long as Tyre used her *חכמתה* for the accomplishment of this work, she radiated "the perfection of beauty" (see Verse 7).

*Verse 13.* Even as Israel was to regain its own renewed *ארץ*, so the earth gladly yielded up its treasure also for Tyre as "God's own Eden." The same precious stones that had once lain in the ground beneath the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2,11–12) and, significantly, had adorned the breastplate of the High Priest (Exodus 28,16), had also been upon the garment (*מִסְדָּה*) of the king of Tyre.

The meaning of *מלְאָכָת תְּפִיךְ וְנִכְבֵּךְ* is very uncertain. The Sages (בְּנֵי בְּחֻרָא) interpret this verse as God's words of reproach directed at the king's hubris and self-adulation. בְּנֵי נָהָלוֹת תְּרָאֵת נִכְבִּים בְּאָדָם כְּרָנְכָלָיו וְקָנָתוֹ: *טִיחָה עַל אָדָם הַרְאֵשׁ*: Man's obvious God-ordained frailty and mortality should certainly have deterred the king of Tyre from crediting himself with divine attributes. In the light of this interpretation *תְּפִיךְ* would denote the physical body of man which has been provided with all manner of cavities. In Rabbinic terminology *תְּפִיךְ* is an earthen hearth: *(תְּנוּר וְכִירִים יְחִיק)* (Leviticus 11,35)—*תְּנוּר* is related to the Hebrew *רַוֵּחַ*, a "tambourine" or "hollow drum." *וְכִירִים* are the orifices and cavities vital to the functions of the human body. Hidden beneath the splendid outer shell with which nature so generously covered him, there was his frail, mortal body, just as God had formed it on the day he was created (for בְּשָׁנָה וּכְבוּנָה: see Psalms 119,73: *צִדְצִיךְ עָשָׂו וְכִבּוּנָה* and Job 31,15: *רִבְשָׁנָה אָדוֹן*). This thought alone should have deterred Tyre's ruler from believing himself endowed with divine qualities. The *Targum*, too, renders the present verse in this context: בְּרָם לֹא אָסְכָּלָה כְּמַנְךָ דְּאַתְּבִּיד חֲלִין וְנִכְבִּים דָּאַתְּכִין צְרִיכָן דָּלָא אַשְׁר לְךָ וְהַתְּקִים בְּלֹא בְּהָן "But you did not consider your body, which was created with cavities and orifices without which you would not be able to survive."

**14.** You—a cherub! Anointed to become a protector! I had set you upon a holy mountain; you were a god, you directed your feet amidst fiery stones.

**15.** You were perfect in your conduct since the day you were created—until wrong was found in you.

**14.** אַתְּ־כָּרוֹב מִמְשֻׁחַ הַפּוֹךְ  
וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ לְגַדֵּשׁ אֱלֹהִים הָיִתְּ  
בְּתוֹךְ אֲכַנְּרִיאָשׁ הַתְּהִלְכָתֶךָ:

**15.** תְּמִימָם אַתָּה בְּרַכְבִּיךְ מִים  
הַבָּרָאָךְ עַרְגַּנְמַצְאָךְ עַרְלָתָה גָּהָ:

**Verse 14.** Initially it seemed that Tyre had been aware of her mortality (note the feminine form of נָגָה; cf. Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,15 and Deuteronomy 5,24) and that she therefore considered herself as a cherub anointed (מִשְׁחָה) by God, a cherub "entrusted with the care (סִוכָּן) of the material and cultural resources of the nations" (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 25,20), working shoulder to shoulder with Israel as a "bearer of the Divine" on earth (see Chapter 1), leading misguided mankind back upon the path to Paradise.

**Verse 15.** מִמְשַׁחַת הַסּוֹקֵן: It seemed that when the king of Tyre had bowed in homage before the God of Zion, he had viewed the whole world as the "mountain of God," on which man was permitted to dwell by the grace of God (Psalm 24,3).

**אֱלֹהִים הָיִתְּ:** In those days, when he had humbly bowed before God without a trace of self-adulation, when he had allowed God to anoint him, Tyre's ruler had stood proud and erect, and what Assaph had said of the true ruler (Psalm 82,6) applied to him also: "אַנְתָּא אָמְרָתִי אֱלֹהִים אַתָּה" "I had thought you were a god, and all of you sons of the Most High." **בְּחֵךְ אֲכַנְּיָא אָשָׁה:** The precious stones whose blaze had devoured so many before him and given them to the sword הַשְׁחָרֶב "flames of the ever-turning sword" (Genesis 3,24) seemed intent to spare the king of Tyre. And so, in the free-willed greatness of a cherub in the service of God, the king of Tyre walked about in the Eden of his material wealth.

**Verse 15.** הַתְּהִלְכָתֶךָ-תְּמִימָם:

It seemed that this gentile ruler sought to realize, also in his own moral conduct, the ideals that the act of *milah* (Genesis 17,1) symbolized for the moral standards (i.e., דִּין) of the Jews. Tyre was not among the צְרָלִים (see Verse 10). Our Jewish prophets, who felt called upon to act as בָּנִים אֲדֹם, must have been filled with pride as they beheld this initial victory of God's triumphant truth. Tyre had been נִידָּה in the true sense of the term, for she was תָּוֹלֵד חֲמִימָם. (This predicate occurs also in Proverbs 28,16–18). But all these high hopes were to end in bitter disillusionment.

16. Due to the abundance of your transactions your inner self became filled with wrongdoing and you became laden with guilt. Then I cast you out from the mountain of God and I destroyed you, who should have been a protecting cherub, from amidst the fiery stones.

17. Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom in depravity because of your dazzling appearance. I have hurled you to the ground; I have set you before kings to gloat over you.

18. Through the abundance of your sins, through the evil of your

16. בָּרוּבְּ רַכְלֹתְךָ מִלְוֵי תֻּכְכֶּךָ חֲמָס  
וַתְּחַטֵּא וַתְּחַלֵּל מִלְוֵר אֱלֹהִים  
וְאֶבְרָךְ בָּרוּבְּ הַסְּכָךְ כְּתֹודָךְ אֱבְנֵי  
אַשׁ:

17. גְּבָהָ לְבָךְ בַּיּוֹנֵק שְׁתַּחַת חַכְמָתְךָ  
עַל-יִפְעָתְךָ עַל-אָרֶץ הַשְּׁלְכָתְךָ  
לִפְנֵי מֶלֶכִים נְתַתְּךָ לְרָאוּה בָּךְ:

18. מִרְבָּ שְׂעִיר בְּעַזְלָתְךָ

**שָׁוְלוֹתָה:** Even the king of Tyre misused (פָּלָל) the high position assigned to him (פָּאָל); see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,15.

**Verses 16–18.** This reads almost like the history of the tragic moral degeneration of the Jewish people (see Chapter 16, Verse 15). In the case of Tyre, too, טָהָר went hand in hand with קָדוֹשָׁה, and social and moral corruption brought a מִבְּלָל-like catastrophe also upon Tyre. חַשְׁתָּה הָאָרֶץ לְפִנֵּי הַאֱלֹקִים וְוָמְלָא הַאָרֶץ חַטָּאת (Genesis 6,11).

**Verses 16–17.** The worship of material wealth robbed the state of its idealism. Along with treasure, Tyre's warehouses were filled also with טָהָר. And so Tyre had to pay the price for having defiled the mountain of God, upon which she should have walked as a cherub. As a cherub, the king of Tyre should have considered it his duty to keep watch over the precious jewels of material wealth. He could not expect that wealth to keep watch over him and to protect him from his enemies. God, in His wrath, snatched him from amidst these very treasures and threw him, dead, at the feet of strangers. Once his wisdom was no longer oriented toward God and hence could no longer guard him from corruption, it also could no longer save him from a miserable end.

**Verse 18.** Tyre had defiled her own sanctuary. The hands that once had helped raise God's Sanctuary on Mount Moriah could have built also on the "mountain of God" (Verse 16), on Tyrian soil, a sanctuary of God that could have shone as a beacon into the night of paganism. But just as that sanctuary

actions you have desecrated the site of your sanctuary. Then I drew forth fire from within you; this consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes before the eyes of all that see you.

**19.** Those that knew you among the nations are stunned at the sight of you; transience you became and you will be no more for all eternity.

**20.** The Word of God came to me:

**21.** Son of mankind, turn your face toward Sidon and speak your prophetic word over her,

**22.** And say: Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I

חוללת מקדשו ואותא אש  
מתוקף היא אקלתך ונתקנְך  
לאפר על הארץ לשני כל-  
ראיך:

**19.** בלוורעיך בעמיהם שפטו  
עליך בלחות היהת ואיןך עד-  
עולם: פ

**20.** ויהי דבריו הוא אליו לאמר:

**21.** בזאתם שום פגוק אל-צדון  
והגבא עלייה:

**22.** ואמרת פה אמר ארני רלה  
הנני עליך צידון ונכברתי

was about to rise in proud splendor, these same hands smashed it with brute force. **אותא אש מתוקף:** As a result, the terrible flames burst forth from within the "mountain of God." The "blazing jewels" (**אבני אש**) of Tyre's material power and wealth turned upon him who in his folly had treated them as idols that would protect him. They changed into "the flames of the ever-turning sword" which, all through history, has cut down those who, though trained by cherubim, refuse to become cherubim themselves and to walk upon the "path of eternal life."

The wretched little heap of "ashes" eloquently symbolizes the mortality which claimed even Tyre once she had spurned her own Garden of Eden.

And so, on the ninth day of Av, Ezekiel mourned not only the downfall of his own nation but also the destruction of a heathen power which God had hoped would someday build a sanctuary to him in its own midst.

*Verse 19.* See Chapter 27, Verses 35-36.

*Verse 20.* The destruction of Tyre was followed by the fall of Sidon. It was in the service of Tyre that "the merchants of Sidon" had "plowed through [the waves of] the sea" (Isaiah 23,2) and gained the respect of the ancient world. But Sidon bent her knee to the same idols that Tyre worshipped, and so Sidon, too, would have to share the fate of Tyre.

*Verse 22.* Like Pharaoh (Exodus 14,4), so Sidon, too would recognize God's greatness and power only at the time of her destruction.

will go [forth]against you, Sidon, and I will make Myself known in your midst in the full force of My greatness; and they will recognize that I am God, when I will execute judgments upon her, and I will show Myself within her in My holiness.

23. I will send pestilence and blood against her in her streets, and the slain, having been executed in her midst, will fall by the sword that will turn against them from every side; and they will recognize that I am He.

24. No longer shall a pernicious thorn and a painful sting come to the house of Israel from any of

בְּתוֹךְ וַיַּרְא קָרְאָנוּ יְהוָה  
בֶּעֱשׂוֹתִי בָּהּ שְׁפָטִים וְגַנְגַשְׁתִּי  
בָּהּ:

23. וְשַׁלְחוֹתִי בָּהּ גָּבָר וּדָם  
בְּחֻזְצֹתִיהָ וְנִפְלֵל חַלֵּל בְּתוֹכָה  
בְּחֶרֶב עֲלֵיהֶם מִפְגַּבְבָּה וַיַּרְא קָרְאָנוּ יְהוָה:

24. וְלֹא־יַרְאָה עוֹד לְבִתְּ יִשְׂרָאֵל  
סְלִון סְמָאִיר וְקוֹז מְקַבֵּב מְפֵל

**חִדְשָׁו כִּי אַנְיָה:** This belated awareness would then come to all those who had believed in Sidon's power. נִקְדָּשָׁי בָּם refers to an object that God utilizes in order that whatever He does for or to that object will cause Him to be recognized as קָדוֹשׁ as i.e., as the Absolute before Whose Will even the greatest and mightiest force must give way (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 10,3).

**Verse 23. נִפְלֵל:** Only when he that has been slain will fall (נִפְלֵל), cut down by the sword, he will, dying, recognize the Divine judgment (פְּלִיל) that has been executed upon him.

**Verse 24.** It was on the day the Sanctuary of God crumbled in ruins (Chapter 26, Verse 1) that the Prophet uttered this great message to the nations of the world. But even as this tragic day that brought so much suffering upon Israel would actually serve to save it, so, too, it was to pave the way for that future era which is described so splendidly at the conclusion of this Prophet's message: On the very day the Temple is destroyed, the Prophet beholds Israel, ingathered after a long exile, united forever on the soil of its homeland.

The people of Israel would never have had to suffer the hatred and oppression of their neighbors (אֹתֶס, see Chapter 25, Verse 6) if they had kept the faith with their God. At first their gentile neighbors became a "ruinous thorn" (אֹתֶס, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 13,51) in their side. The people of Israel yielded to the temptations of their neighbors and, in their desire to come closer to the pagan world, they threw away the most precious treasures

those around them who threaten to attack them, and they will recognize that I am the Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**25.** Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: If in days to come, when I will gather the house of Israel from the nations among whom they were scattered, then I will have been recognized through them in My sanctity, in the eyes of the nations; they will then dwell on their own soil, which I gave to My servant Ya'akov.

**26.** And, borne by it, they shall live in it free from care; they will

סְכִיבַתְּכֶם הַשָּׁאֲפָתִים אֹתָם וַיַּרְא  
כִּי אֲנִי אֶרְאֶנּוּ יְהוָה:

בָּהֶ-אָמֵר אֶרְאֶנּוּ יְהוָה בְּקַבֵּצִי  
אֶת-בָּנָית יִשְׂרָאֵל מִן-הָעָמִים אֲשֶׁר  
נִפְצָאוּ בָּם וּנְקַרְשָׁתִי כְּمֵלֵעַנִּי  
הַגּוֹיִם וּוְשָׁבוּ עַל-אֶרְקָתָם אֲשֶׁר  
נִתְחַתִּי לְעַבְרֵי לִיעָקָב:

וְשָׁבוּ עַלְיהָ לְבַטָּח וּבְנוּ

of their heritage. As a result, God caused the neighboring nations to become a "painful spike," a constant irritant to the people of Israel. (This interpretation is in keeping with the Word of God regarding the heathen population of the Holy Land: *זהיר ... לשכט בעיניכם לאננים בעידיכם* (Numbers 33,55). The people of Israel will be permitted to return to their homeland once their long sufferings will have taught them to realize and to accept forever the truth that *כִּי אֲנִי הַאֲמִת*. Once they have made this truth their own, they will never have to suffer again.

*Verse 25.* **וַיַּדְעֻוּ כִּי אֲנִי הָ**: Dispersed among the nations, the people of Israel rallied once more around their sole sacred treasure and demonstrated before the eyes of all the nations that "to recognize God" means nothing less than to center one's life, totally and unconditionally, around the fulfillment of His holy Will. Only when they will recognize God as their *קדושה*, and His precepts will find *הדרות*, joyous, devoted fulfillment in their midst, will their homeland become truly *ארתת*, the soil they may rightfully claim as their permanent possession. The *galuth* nation, purified in the crucible of exile, will become a worthy scion of Jacob and return as "God's own servant" to the homeland promised to its forefathers.

*Verse 26.* **וְשָׁבוּ לְבַטָּח**: Once the people of Israel have pledged their loyalty to God forever, they will be entitled to feel confident that they will be

build houses, plant vineyards and live free from care, for when I execute judgments on all those round about who attack them, they will recognize that I am (also) their God.

**Chap. 29.** 1. In the tenth year, in the tenth (month), on the twelfth of that month, the Word of God came to me:\*)

\* Cf. Mendel Hirsch, *Hafitoroth*, ס' ח'ו.

בְּתִים וַגְּטוּשׁוּ כֶּרֶםִים  
וּוָשְׁבוּ לְבָטֵח בְּעַשׂוֹתִי שָׁפְטִים  
בְּכָל הַשָּׁאָפִים אַתֶּם מִסְכִּינּוֹתֶם  
וַיַּרְעֹזְכִּי אֲנִי וְהִנֵּה אֱלֹהִיכֶם: ס  
כַּט ۱. בְּשָׁנָה הַעֲשֵׂרִית בְּעַשְׂרֵי  
בְּשָׁנִים עָשָׂר לְחַדְשֵׁת תִּוְהָרָבָר  
רוּחַ אֶלְיוֹן לְאָמֶר:

"sustained by their land," free from care and from fear of enemy attack. For then the people of Israel will have fulfilled the condition set by God for the fulfillment of His promise. (*Leviticus 25,18*): "The land will sustain its population," as opposed to *וְחַקְיָה הָאָרֶץ אֶת יְשֻׁבָּה* (*Leviticus 18,25*).

**ד' וְשָׁבוּ לְבָטֵח:** But there is yet another reason why the people of Israel will then be able to live for their God in peace, free of care and from the fear of attack from hostile neighbors: the Divine chastisements inflicted upon the nations that once felt only hatred and contempt for Israel will then have fulfilled their purpose. The pagan nations, too, will have learned to accept the God of Israel as their own God: *כִּי אֵין הָאֱלֹהִים*.

**Zechariah** (9,1–2) envisions a day when the Word of God will be accepted in its entirety by all the nations of the world, when "Tyre and Sidon" will measure all things by the standards set by God.

**Chapter 29.** The Prophet's messages to his people during the final difficult years of transition (see introductory remarks to Chapter 25) conclude with the prophecy concerning Egypt (Chapters 29–32). No other prophecy could have initiated the process of Israel's regeneration better than Ezekiel's prediction of the ultimate downfall of the ancient Egyptian empire in whose strength the Jewish state of his day had stubbornly and gullibly put its trust and which it had expected to come to its rescue even after the catastrophe had struck (see *Jeremiah*, Chapters 42–44). For this reason, as shown by the chronological superscription, these prophecies were not all uttered at the same time. The final prophecy (Chapter 32) dates from a time when the people of Israel had already lost their national independence and were lamenting the fatal illusions that had caused their downfall.

2. Son of mankind, turn your face toward Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, and speak your prophetic word concerning him and concerning all of Mitzrayim.

3. Say and explain: Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will come over you, Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, you giant crocodile that lies in the midst of its rivers, proclaiming: mine is my river, and I have created myself!

4. I will put hooks into your gills and will cause the fish of

בָּנְדָאֵם שִׁים פָּנִיק עַל־פְּרֻעָה  
מֶלֶךְ מִצְרָיִם וְהַנְּכָא עַלְיוֹ וְעַל־  
מִצְרָיִם כָּלָה:

רַבָּר וְאַמְרָתָ בְּהִ אָמָר | אֲרַנִּי  
יְהוָה הַנְּנִי עַלְיָק פְּרֻעָה מֶלֶךְ  
מִצְרָיִם הַתְּנִינִים הַגּוֹלָה רַבָּע בְּתָן  
יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר אָמָר לִי יְאָרֵי וְאֲנִי  
עֲשִׂיתָנִי

וְנִתְתַּנִּי חַיִים בְּלִתְחִיךְ  
וְהַרְבָּקָתִי רַנְתְּדִידְיְאָרֵיךְ  
חַיִם קָרֵי

**Verses 2–3.** The Prophet sees Pharaoh as a personification of the Egyptian empire that considered itself to be divine. This was the nation within whose territory Israel had been born by Divine miracles meant to restore to nature and history the seal of God's presence that had been obliterated by human arrogance. But alas, the calamities God had inflicted on Egypt at that time had been long forgotten. Egypt was once again exactly what she had been when Moses, the man of God, first emerged. Ezekiel declares that if Moses were to return to Egypt once again with a message from God, he would again be received with the arrogant words **מי ה' אשר אשפט בקהלו** (Exodus 5.2). He would cast his staff again before Pharaoh and have it turn into a crocodile (Exodus 7.9), for Pharaoh is "the great crocodile" that "exists by the grace of the river gods" (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.). Egypt still worshipped her river, the Nile, whose regular inundations kept her soil supplied with water regardless of the region's erratic rainfall. By constructing an elaborate system of canals, she had converted this **יאר** into a network of **יארים** that aided the irrigation of the soil. Having accomplished this, Egypt thought she had the right to say, **לי יאר**, that she had created her own river god and had therefore become her own creator, **הוּא עֲשִׂיתִי** the creator of her own existence. But there was still a God capable of asserting His eternal rights even in the face of such incredible megalomania.

We can understand why the terse **דבר** of God's own utterance must be followed by a more detailed explanation (**האמְרָת**) from the Prophet.

**Verses 4–5.** These verses, following immediately upon Verse 3, convey a graphic image of utter helplessness. There is nothing the Egyptian "sea

your rivers to stick to your scales, and I will bring you out from your rivers and all the fish in your rivers that stick to your scales.

5. And I will cause you to be cast out into the wilderness, you and all the fish of your rivers; you will fall headlong upon the open field; you will not be brought home nor gathered together; you will be left as feed for the beasts of the earth and the birds of the skies.

6. All the inhabitants of Mitzrayim shall learn that I am God, for they were but a weak staff of reed for the house of Israel.

בקשׁוֹשׁתִּיךְ וַהֲלֵלִתִּיךְ מִתּוֹךְ  
יָאָרֶיךְ וְאַתְּ כְּלִידָנָתְךָ יָאָרֶיךְ  
בקשׁוֹשׁתִּיךְ תַּרְבֵּךְ:

5. וַיַּנְפְּשַׁתִּיךְ הַמְּרַבְּרָה אַתְּךָ וְאַתְּ  
כְּלִידָנָתְךָ יָאָרֶיךְ עַל־פָּנֵי הַשָּׂרָה  
תַּפְולֵל אֶל־תַּאֲסֵף וְלֹא תִּקְבַּע לְחַיָּת  
הָאָרֶץ וְלֹעֵופֵף הַשָּׁמְמִים נִמְתִּיךְ  
לְאָכְלָה:

6. וַיַּרְשׁוּ כְּלִי־שְׁבֵי טָכְרִים בְּיַאֲנֵי  
יוֹתָה בְּצֻן הַיּוֹתָם טְשָׁעָנָת־קָנָה  
לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל:

"monster" can do to defend itself. All the fish that cling to its scales in hopes of security will perish together with the monster to whom they had looked for protection. The "open field" becomes a wilderness, a death trap, for the monster that has been snatched from its natural habitat. The land animals pounce upon the parts of the sea monster that are no longer organically joined together but are crumbling into pieces. There can no longer be any hope for **אֹיסָה**; i.e., that Egypt might regain her former vitality by being restored to her rivers. (**רָחָק**: "To take something from a place or a locality where it does not really belong, and transfer it to the place where it truly belongs"; see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,1). Even **כְּבָרָה**, a "spatial, superficial reunion" of scattered parts for a bare existence can come about only by the grace of God after a period of severe trials (see Verse 13).

**Verses 6–9.** A state that considers itself the creator of its own power (**לִי יָאָרֵי**) (אוֹנִי) will not hesitate to use its resources for its own ruthless, selfish purposes (**עַשְׂתָּנוּי**). Any nation that expects help, or moral and decent conduct, from a state which no longer pays any attention to God will be sadly disillusioned. The slogan **לִי יָאָרֵי עַשְׂתָּנוּי פְּשָׁטוּנִי** is logically followed by **אָרֶר לִי חָנֵי** (Verse 9). Egypt believed that all the material resources she had acquired by her own toil and trouble must be used only to promote her own interests. The river Nile was meant to serve only Egypt, as the people of Israel had to learn from bitter experience since they had refused to listen to the warning of the prophets. Egypt had turned out to be only a weak reed. The Jewish nation had reached

7. When they took hold of you with their hand, you broke down and tore their whole shoulder open; when they leaned upon you, you collapsed and completely crippled their hips.

8. Therefore, thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: See, I will bring the sword upon you and will wipe out from among you man and beast.

9. And the land of Mitzrayim will become desolate and a place of ruins, and they will learn that I am God—for she had proclaimed: The river exists only for me; I have created!

10. Therefore I will confront you and your rivers and turn the land of Mitzrayim into a place of ruins, full of rubble ending in desolation from Migdal to Sevneh and to the border of Kush.

ג. בַּתְּחִפְשָׁם קֹעֶן בְּכֶפֶר תְּרוֹז  
יַקְנַעַת לָהֶם כָּלְבִּתְתַּף וּבְחַשְׁעַנְמָן  
עַלְיוֹךְ תְּשִׁבְרָה וּבְעַמְדָת לָהֶם כָּלְ-  
מַתְנִים: ס

ד. לְבָנָו כִּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה הָנָנָי  
מִקְיָא עַלְיוֹךְ תְּרֵב וּבְכְרִתִּי מִפְּנֵי  
אָרֶם וּבְהַמָּה:

ה. וְתִוְתַּחַת אָרֶץ-מִצְרָיִם לְשִׁמְמָה  
וּתְרֵבָה וּגְדוּשָׂה כִּירְאָנוּ יְהוָה יְהֻנָּה  
אֲמֹר וְאֶרְלִי וְאֶנוּ עֲשִׂיתִי:

ו. לְבָנָו הָנָנָי אַלְיךָ וְאַלְיוֹאַדְיךָ  
וּנְתַחַת אֶת-אָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לְתִרְכּוֹת  
תְּרֵב שִׁמְמָה מִפְּנַגְלָל סְוִנָּה וְעַד-  
גָּבוֹל כּוֹשָׁה:

כַּכְּפָרִי.

out for that reed, not realizing that, from the very beginning, Egypt had used the Jews only as political playball in her hand (בְּכֶפֶר תְּחִיכָּה). The hope of support from Egypt was shattered when the Jewish people would have needed her help the most. Figuratively, the weak reed to which Israel clung tore open its shoulder, and robbed Israel's arm of its strength. It buckled beneath Israel's thigh so that Israel could not even make a move to save itself.

*Verses 8–10.* God now enters the battle against Egypt. Egypt is quickly cut down by God's sword. The river gods cannot save her. The ruin and desolation that this same sword brought also upon other lands are now threatening Egypt as well (Verse 9). But unlike the ruins of other lands, the ruins of Egypt spell complete destruction (Verse 10). The cities of other lands may also lie in ruins, but the cities of Egypt must present a picture of even greater devastation (Verse 12) because in the case of Egypt God must do battle not only with the land but also with its river (Verse 10). God must place His mark once again

11. No foot of man will pass through it, nor will foot of beast pass through it; it will remain uninhabited for forty years.

12. I will turn the land of Mitzrayim into a desolation amidst desolate lands, and its cities will become desolate amidst destroyed cities, for forty years, and I will scatter Mitzrayim among the nations and disperse them throughout the lands.

13. For thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: At the end of forty years I will gather Mitzrayim from the nations among whom they were scattered.

14. And I will turn again toward the dispersed of Mitzrayim and re-

11. לא תִּצְבֹּר־בָּהּ רַגֵּל אֲדָם וּרְגֵל  
בְּהַקְרָה לֹא תִּצְבֹּר־בָּהּ וְלֹא תִּשְׁבַּח  
אֲרָבָּעִים שָׁנָה:

12. וְגַתְתִּי אֶת־אָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם  
שְׁמַפְתָּה בְּתוֹךְ | אֲרָצּוֹת נִשְׁמָתוֹת  
עוֹרִיה בְּתוֹךְ עָנוּם מִחְרָבוֹת  
תְּהִינָּה שְׁמַפְתָּה אֲרָבָּעִים שָׁנָה  
וּבְפִצְתִּי אֶת־סִכְרָיִם בְּנוּיִם  
וּוְרִיתִים בְּאֲרָצּוֹת: פ

13. בַּי כָּה אָקֵר אַרְגֵן יְהוָה סְפִינָה  
אֲרָבָּעִים שָׁנָה אַקְבֵּץ אֶת־סִכְרָיִם  
סְמִינָה עָפָם אֲשֶׁר־גַּנְפְּצָו שְׁפָה:

14. וְשַׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבּוֹת מִצְרָיִם  
וְהַשְׁבֹּתִי אֶתְם אָרֶץ פְּטוּרוֹת עַל־

on both nature and history. That is why Egypt must fall to the sword, and the banks of the Nile, once the river that gave her life, must become a scene of total desolation.

סְמִינָה סְתָה—from the north to the south.

*Verses 11–14.* For 40 years Egypt was to remain a wilderness. The people of Egypt would have to atone for their sins by wandering through their own wilderness for a period of 40 years until God in His quality of ה would see fit to grant them a modest new existence. The same Divine Providence that trained a nation, by its experience in the wilderness, to become God's own people is revealed also in the history of nations that are completely alienated from God. As with the Children of Israel, these nations, too, will see a new life arise for them even amidst death in the wilderness, and God will turn in mercy also to their exiles.

For an explanation of תְּהִינָּה see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 30,3.

Egypt will indeed experience קְבוּמָה (Verse 13) but not אֲסִירָה (see Verse 5). She will never again be in a position to relapse into self-adulation.

*Verses 14–15.* From the province where she had her beginnings

turn them to the land of Pathros, to the land of their origin, and there they will be a lowly kingdom.

**15.** It will be lowlier than other kingdoms and will no longer lift itself up above the nations; I will make them small in number so that they will no longer rule over the nations.

**16.** It will no longer be the confidence of the house of Israel and thereby bring to mind its guilt when they turn to follow them. Then they will recognize that I am the Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**17.** It came to pass in the

ארץ מקורותם והיו שם ממלכה  
שפללה:

15. מניה ממלכות תרעה שפללה  
ולא-תתנשא עוד על-הגנים  
והמעטים לבളתי רמות בנים:

16. לא יהיה-עו"ד לבית ישראל  
למכתה סוקיר עון בפנותם  
אתרים וירעו כי אני אלי  
יְהוָה: פ

17. ויהי בעשורים ושבע שנה

in remote antiquity, Egypt may make a fresh start on the road to political independence, but this time however, she will be only a minor power among the nations. *מכוורת*, see Chapter 16, Verse 3.

*Verse 16.* The house of Israel had put its trust in Egypt far too long. Israel had rudely disregarded God's warning (Deuteronomy 17,16). God did not wish the Jewish people ever to become dependent on Egypt in any fashion. A poignant reminder of Israel's disregard of God's wish was already implied in the words *במנוחות אחרים*. Even by giving a place to Egypt in its political considerations, the Jewish nation had transgressed God's prohibition (סנה, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,4). It was only a natural consequence of this attitude that the Jewish nation then also followed Egypt and eventually relied on her as its strongest support.

But now those days are gone forever. In future, the Jewish people will know Who is, and must be, their sole Lord and Ally.

This realization, which the Prophet must help promote (Verse 21), will bring about Israel's recovery and rebirth. Everything will depend on how Israel will view the victory of Babylonia's armies. Only if Israel will see Nebuchadnezzar merely as a tool in the service of God will these world-shaking events have fulfilled their true purpose. Hence the Prophet must see to it that Israel gains this perception of Babylonia's triumph.

*Verses 17–20.* For this very reason Verse 16 is followed by a message

twenty-seventh year, in the first (month), on the first day of the month, that the Word of God came to me:

18. Son of mankind, Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, has caused his army to perform a great service against Tyre; every head has become bald, every shoulder rubbed sore, but neither he nor his army has received any reward for the service which he performed against her.

19. Therefore, thus said the Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will give to Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon, the land of Mitzrayim. He will carry off its spoils, capture its booty and take its prey; let this be the reward for his army.

20. As a well-earned reward for service rendered have I given him the land of Mitzrayim, since

**בראשון באת'ר לח'רש היה  
דבריו הורה אליו לאמר:**

18. **בְּנֵי אָלָם נִבְכְּרָא צָר מֶלֶךְ  
בְּבָל הַעֲבִיר אַתְּ-חִילוֹ עֲבָרָה  
גָּדְלָה אַלְצָר בְּלִרְאָשׁ מִקְרָה  
וּכְלִיכְתָּפָ מְרוֹטָה וּשְׁכָר לְאַדְמָה  
לוֹזְלָחִילוֹ טָצָר עַל-הַעֲבָרָה אֲשֶׁר-  
עֲבָר עַלְיָה: ס**

19. **לְכֹן בָּה אָסְרָ אַרְגֵּן יְהֹהָה הַנְּגִינִי  
נְתַנֵּן לִנְבְּכְּרָא צָר מֶלֶךְ בְּבָל אַתְּ-  
אָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם וּנְשָׂא הַמְּנָה וּשְׁלָל  
שְׁלָלָה וּבָנָן בָּזָה וְהַוְתָּה שְׁכָר  
לְחִילָה:**

20. **פָּעַלְתָּו אֲשֶׁר-עֲבָר בָּה גַּתְתִּי**

from God addressed to Ezekiel in the year that Egypt was conquered by Nebuchadnezzar. This message portrays the ruler of Babylonia and his armies as servants of the "Supreme War Lord." These armies had labored long and hard to lay siege to Tyre and were deprived of their just "reward" only at the last moment. According to tradition, Tyre and her treasures were swallowed up by the rising tides of the sea (see Chapter 26, Verse 19). But Nebuchadnezzar and his hosts were not to go unrewarded. They would be amply compensated by the treasures of Egypt. (הַמְּנָה denotes not only a crowd of people but also an amassment of wealth; see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 37,16). They need only stretch out their hands and help themselves. The loot, the spoils are there, waiting for them, **כח כה שְׁלָל שְׁלָלָה וּבָנָן בָּזָה**. At a time when Egypt still cherishes dreams of everlasting supremacy, God considers her merely as a reward for an army which, albeit without knowing it, has served to promote the cause of God (**אֲשֶׁר פָּשָׁו לִי**).

they performed (the service) for Me, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**21.** On that day I will cause the horn of the house of Israel to shoot up, and I will help you so that your mouth will open in their midst, and they will recognize that I am God Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 30.** 1. And the Word of God came to me:

לו אֶת-אָרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂו  
לֵי נָאָם אֶרְאָנִי יְהוָה: ס

21. בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אַצְמָתִים קָרְנוֹ לְבִית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל וְלֹעֲדָת אַפְנֵי פָתָח-זָהָב  
בְּתוֹכָם וּבְרֹאשׁ כִּירְאָנִי יְהוָה: פ

ל וַיֹּהֵי רְבָרִיהָנָה אֱלֹי לְאָמְרָה:

This message from God reflects precisely the Jewish view of world history set down with classic brevity in Isaiah 40,10: הנה ה' א' בחק יבוא וורעו משלה לו, every "great power" in the annals of humanity serves only to prepare the ground for God's entry into history. Every such "power" serves His purposes and receives its "wages" from His hand: הנה שכרו אוֹר ופעלו רפויו (פעלו, see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 15,18).

**Verse 21:** Given this realization, the "horn" (קָרֵן, symbol of strength) of the house of Israel will flourish again in that Israel, taught by historical experience, will henceforth cling firmly to the only source from which it can expect an abundance of genuine strength, namely, God; see פָשׁ אַצְמָתִ קָרֵן לְדוֹד (Psalms 132, 17).

At the same time these experiences will help remove the obstacles that formerly blocked the Prophet's efforts (פָשׁ תְּמִימָה, see Chapter 24,27). His message will show his people the road on which alone they will be able to attain power beyond its fondest dreams. This message will then be heard and accepted all over the world: יִדְעֻוּ כִּי אָנִי ה'.

**Chapter 30.** Even when he had to remain silent in the face of foolish doubts and condescending smiles from among his own people, the Prophet was commanded to direct his view to the day when the downfall of Egypt would mark the beginning of Israel's rebirth as the people of God. Chapter 30 is a direct continuation of Chapter 29, Verse 16.

2. Son of mankind, prophesy and say: Thus said my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: Lament, alas for the day!

3. For the day is near and the day of God is near—it will be a day of clouds, a fateful day for the nations.

4. For when the sword will come to Mitzrayim, convulsions will seize Kush when the slain will fall in Mitzrayim; stripped of its abundance, its foundations will be razed.

5. Kush, Phut and Lud, all the mingled people, Chuv and the sons of the allied land will fall by the sword with them.

6. Thus said God: When the supports of Mitzrayim have fallen, then the pride of its strength has come down; from Migdal to Sevneh will they fall by the sword in

בָּנָדָרִים הַגְּבָאָ וְאֶמְרָתָ בָּהּ אֱכֹר אֲרֻנוּ יְהוָה חִילְלוּ הַהָּלִיּוֹם:

בְּיִדְקְרֻבָּ יוֹם וְקָרוּבָּ יוֹם לֵיהָוָה יוֹם עָזָן עַת גּוֹם וְהִיא:

וְבָאָה חָרָב בְּמִצְרָיִם וְהִוְתָּה חַלְחָלָה בְּכֹשֶׁ בְּגַפֵּל חַלָּל בְּמִצְרָיִם וְלִקְחוּ בְּמוֹנָה וְגַרְבָּתוֹ יְסָרוֹתְּךָ:

גְּזִישׁוּ פְּטוֹת וּלְוִרְכָּלְהָעָרָב נְכוֹבָה וּבְנֵי אָרֶץ הַבְּנִירָת אַתָּם בְּחָרָב יְשָׁלָה פָּ:

דְּבָה אֱכֹר וְהָוָה וְגַפְלוּ סְמָכִי מִצְרָיִם וְנַדְרֵד גְּאוֹן עַזָּה מְמַנְלֵל

*Verse 2.* Even if Israel should turn a deaf ear to the Prophet's warnings, let the other nations join Ezekiel in raising their voices in lamentation over the day of judgment that will come upon Egypt. The relevance of the Prophet's message is not changed by the reaction of a generation that is not yet ready to understand it.

*Verse 3.* To the Prophet's eye that day is close at hand, and when it comes, it will come as a day of God. For along with Egypt, Egypt's gods, too, will perish, and the horror that will strike nations far and wide is only part of the great work of education with which God seeks to win mankind back for Himself (see Verse 13).

*Verses 4–6.* The destruction of Egypt will bring about the downfall of her allies as well. They, the "supports of Egypt" (Verse 6) helped form the foundations (סִדּוֹת, Verse 4) of her power. They were *גָּאַן כָּה*. Egypt will hurriedly gather them to aid her in her last desperate struggle, but their

its midst—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**7.** And they will become desolate in the midst of desolate lands, and its cities will be in the midst of cities that were destroyed.

**8.** Thus will they recognize that I am God Who have set fire to Mitzrayim and her former supporters will be broken.

**9.** On that day will messengers go forth from Me in ships to rouse Kush from its [illusion of] security and convulsions will seize it as if it were the day of Mitzrayim—for, behold, it comes!

**10.** Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: When I will cause Mitzrayim's noisy throng to cease, by the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, king of Babylon,

סְגָנָה בְּחֶרֶב יִשְׁלֹׂצֵבָה נָאָם אֲדֹנִי  
יְהוָה:

ז. וְנַשְׁמַו בְּתוֹךְ אֶرְצֹת נְשָׂמֹות  
עָרָיו בְּתוֹךְ עָרִים גַּתְּרֻבּוֹת  
תְּהִרְיָנָה:

וְוַרְעָשׁ כִּירְאָנִי וְהָנוּ בְּתִתְיָאָשׁ  
בְּמָצְרִים וְנִשְׁבְּרוּ כְּלִיעָרִיה:

ו. בְּיוֹם הַהּוּא נִצְאָו מְלָאָכִים  
מַלְפְּנֵי בָּצִים לְהַחֲרֵיד אֶת-בּוֹשׁ  
בְּטֻחַ וְוַיּוֹתֵה חַלְחָלָה בָּהֶם בְּיוֹם  
מָצְרִים כִּי הַנְּהָה בְּאַהֲרֹן:

ז. כִּי אָמַר אֲדֹנִי יְהוָה  
וְהַשְׁבְּתֵי אֶת-בְּמָמוֹן מָצְרִים בְּעֵד  
נִכּוֹכְרָאָצֵר מֶלֶךְ בְּבֵל:

life-blood, too, will be spilled on her soil by the sword of the triumphant foe (Verse 5).

*Verse 7.* refers to Egypt (Verse 6). They share the fate of Egypt (Chapter 29, Verse 12), in that the once-powerful cities of Egypt (עָרִיו) is a masculine form, referring to Egypt) will become cities amidst the ruins of cities that have been devastated and (וְהַרְיֵן שְׂמָה) (see Chapter 29, Verse 12), as will be described in graphic detail in Verses 14–18 of the present chapter.

*Verses 8–9.* God's messengers will startle Cush from her false sense of security as Egypt's ally. Cush, too, about to perish, will begin to suspect the existence of a God Most High Who rules over the destinies of nations. כי אם: Cush is trembling as if Egypt's day of doom would mark her own destruction as well. כי הנה בא הוא: Cush sees the sword poised over her also. The word probably implies חָרֵב (see Verse 4).

*Verses 10–12.* This messenger of God is the king of Babylonia who, all-powerful though he may consider himself (see our notes on Chapter 28, Verse 7), is only a tool in the hand of God. Only one word from God, and

11. Then he and his people with him—tyrant nations drunk with power—will be brought in to destroy the earth; they will draw their swords against Mitzrayim and fill the land with slain.

12. I will turn rivers into dry land and give the land over to the rule of evil men and will cause the land and its abundance to become desolate by the hand of strangers—I, God, have spoken.

13. Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: When I will cause idolatry to perish and disappear, and non-gods from Nof, and a prince from the land of Mitzrayim shall come forth no more, then I will put the fear (of God) in the land of Mitzrayim.

14. I will cause Pathros to become desolate and I will set fire to

וְהוּא תַּעֲמֹד אֶתְךָ עִירֵיךְ נָיוּם  
סְמוּכָאִים לְשִׁתְּתַת הָאָרֶץ וְהַנִּיקְ  
חַרְבָּוֹתֶם עַל־מִצְרָיִם וּמִלְאֹא אַתְּ  
הָאָרֶץ חֶלְלָה:

12. וְגַתְתִּי וְאַרְדִּים חֲרַבָּה וּמִכְרָתִי  
אַתְּהָאָרֶץ בִּידְרָעִים וּבְשִׁמְתִּי  
אָרֶץ וּמִלְאָה בִּידְרָעִים אָנִי וְהַעֲ  
דְּבָרָתִי ס

13. כִּי־הָאָמֵר אֶל־נַּיְהָה וּמַאֲכְרָתִי  
גָּלוּיִם וּבְשִׁבְטִי אַלְילִים מִנְפָּנָי  
וּנְשִׂיא מִאָרֶץ־מִצְרָיִם לֹא יְהָדָה  
עוֹד וְגַתְתִּי יְרַקָּה בָּאָרֶץ פָּצָרִים:

14. וּבְשִׁמְתִּי אַת־פָּתָרָם וְגַתְתִּי

mighty Egypt will turn into a wilderness. God, Who once turned the sea of Egypt into dry land (Exodus 14,21: יְשַׁטֵּת אֹתָהּ הַיּוֹם לְחַרְבָּה), now breathes also upon Egypt's rivers with His word. And though there is no Moses now to stretch out his hand over them, these "strangers" and corrupt individuals will be no less the tools of God's almighty will.

*Verse 13.* "Behold, God rides upon a swift cloud; He enters Egypt, and the idols of Egypt will tremble at His presence, and the heart of Egypt will melt within her" (Isaiah 19,1). God is at work to set up His altar in Egypt, the altar whose completion had been foretold by Isaiah. God's decision for destruction prepares the ground on which alone His altar can rise some day. If Egypt is overwhelmed by a feeling of utter helplessness as she sees the fall of her gods, including the Pharaonic dynasty, it will mean that Egypt, too, has come to feel that awe which someday will help her, too, become a "nation of God" (Isaiah 19,25).

לא תִּחְנַן שׂוֹר עַל גָּנוּם וְנָשָׁא וְנָ  
(Chapter 29, Verse 15).

*Verses 14–19.* That is why the great cities of Egypt and their gods must

Zoan and execute justice concerning No;

**15.** I will pour out My anger over Sin, the source of Mitzrayim's power, and I will destroy the milling throngs of No;

**16.** I will set fire to Mizrayim; Sin will be seized with birthpangs, No will succumb and be crushed, and Nof will be afflicted by trouble all day long.

**17.** The young men of Aven and Phi-besess will fall by the sword, but they will go into captivity.

**18.** And in Tach'pan'ches the day will grow dark when I break down Mitzrayim's yokes and the pride of her power will vanish

אֲשֶׁר בָּצְעֵן וַעֲשִׂיתִי שְׁפָטִים בָּנָא:

15. וְשִׁפְכָתִי חַמְתִי עַל־סִין קָמָעוֹ  
מִצְרָיִם וְהַכְּרָתִי אֶת־הַמּוֹן נָא:

16. וְנִתְתַּי אֲשֶׁר בְּמִצְרָיִם חֹלְגָחֵל  
סִין וּנָא תָהִיה לְהַבְקָע וְנָפָ אֲרִי  
יּוֹם:

17. בְּחֻנוֹרִי אָנוֹ וְפִירְקָת בְּתָרָב  
יָפְלוּ וְהִנֵּה בְּשֵׁבִי תְּלִקְנָה.

18. וּבְתְחַפְנָחָם חָשֵׁךְ הַיּוֹם  
בְּשִׁבְרוֹדִישָׁם אֶת־מִטּוֹת מִצְרָיִם

תְּחַלְקָרִי.

fall. Once again the words (Exodus 12,12) become living reality.

*Verse 15.* When God smites נָא (Kemotz נָא), then אָמֵן קָמָעוֹ (Jeremiah 46,25), the deity worshipped by those deluded masses, will fall as well.

*Verse 16.* The words לְהַבְקָע וְנוֹר continue the description of those that perish at the hour of their birth (חַחְלִיל) (see Malbim). This interpretation would support a similar interpretation for אֲרִי, as it occurs in many instances in the Books of the Prophets, especially in the Book of Isaiah: אֲרִי instead of צְרוֹת as in Jeremiah 48,5 (see Malbim, ibid.).

*Verse 17.* אָנוֹ is a circumlocution for אָן, an Egyptian city; i.e., a city in which "abuses of power" were rise. נָהָה (a feminine form) refers to the daughters who will collapse in a dead faint (see Verse 16).

*Verse 18.* Tach'pan'ches, the residence of the Pharaohs and of the "Sun Queen" (see Jeremiah 43; cf. Malbim), where the deluded of Judah sought refuge from the night that is about to fall (ibid.), will bear the full brunt of God's judgment. There God will break מִטּוֹת מִצְרָיִם, the "bars of the yoke" which Egypt had imposed upon other nations and beneath which Judah, too, had bent in her folly even though God had broken the bars of her yoke forever (Leviticus 26,13). In Egypt, God will smash the obelisks of the Temple of the Sun (Jeremiah 43,13). The "day of [dark] clouds" (Verse 3) will cover all of

from within her. As for her, thick clouds will cover her and her daughters will go into captivity.

19. Thus will I execute judgment on Mitzrayim, and they will recognize that I am God.

20. It came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first (month), on the seventh of the month, that the word of God came to me:

21. Son of mankind, I have broken the arm of Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim and, behold, it has not been bandaged in that it would have been given cures and have a bandage placed upon it, to bind it up in order to make it strong again so that it would be able to hold a sword.

22. Therefore, thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will come over Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, and I will break his arms, the strong and that which was broken, and I will cause the sword to fall from his hand.

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Egypt (הַיּוֹם עַן יְכֻנָּה), but no one will feel so devastated by the night as the people of Tach'pan'ches.

*Verse 20 ff.* This new message from God, which came only two months later, indicates that the disaster the Prophet had to predict for Egypt occurred at the moment of Pharaoh-Necho's bloody defeat on the banks of the river Euphrates in his march to the east (cf. Rashi). Nebuchadnezzar's conquest of Egypt only completed the defeat that had begun at Carchemish. Jeremiah (Chapter 46) viewed these events in the same context.

*Verse 22.* In Egypt God will break both of Pharaoh's arms (וּרְעָת, an incomplete plural form), so that he will drop his sword. Now, both his good arm and the one already broken will be so badly shattered that "Pharaoh's arms will fall off" (Verse 25). Such will be the pitiful end of the once mighty Egyptian empire.

וְנִשְׁבַּתְּכֶה גָּאוֹן עֹזָה הַיּוֹם עַן  
יְכֻנָּה וּבְנֹותִיהָ בְּשָׁבֵי תְּלִכְנָה:

19. וְעַשְׂתֵּי שְׁפָטִים בְּמִצְרָיִם  
וְגָרַשְׂךָ כִּירָאָנִי יוֹהָה פ

20. וְיָהִי בְּאַתְּתָּה שְׁשָׁרָה שָׁנָה  
בְּרָאֹשׁוֹן בְּשָׁבָעָה לְאַרְשָׁ הַיּוֹם  
רְכָרְיוֹנָה אֱלִי לְאָמָר:

21. בְּנֹאָרֶס אֲתִיזְרָעָה פְּרָעָה מֶלֶךְ  
מִצְרָיִם שְׁבָרָתִי וְהַנָּהָה לְאַחֲכָשָׁה  
לְתַתְּ רְפָאֹת לְשָׁום חַתּוֹל לְחַבְשָׁה  
לְחוֹקָה לְתַפְשָׁ בְּחַרְבָּם

22. לְכָנָכְהָאָפָר אֲרַגְּנִי יוֹהָה הַנָּנוּ  
אֲלִי-פְּרָעָה מֶלֶךְ-מִצְרָיִם וְשְׁבָרָתִי  
אֲתִיזְרָעָה יְהִמְמָה וְאֲתִ  
הַגְּשָׁבָת וְהַפְּלָטִי אֲתִיהָרָב  
מִירָה:

**23.** And I will scatter Mitzrayim among the nations and disperse her among the lands.

**24.** I will strengthen the arms of the king of Babylon and put My sword in his hand, and I will break the arms of Pharaoh, and he will moan—the moaning of the slain before him.

**25.** I will cause the arms of the king of Babylon to be strong and the arms of Pharaoh will fall down, and they will recognize that I am God when I place My sword in the hand of the king of Babylon and he stretches it out over the land of Mitzrayim.

**26.** And I will scatter Mitzrayim among the nations and disperse her among the lands and so they will recognize that I am God.

**Chap. 31.** 1. It came to pass in the eleventh year, in the third (month), on the first of the month, that the Word of God came to me:

23. וְהַפְצֹתִי אֶת־מִצְרָיִם בְּגּוּם  
וְנִירִיתָם בְּאָרְצֹות:

24. וְחַזְקֵתִי אֶת־זִרְעוֹתְּ מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל  
וְנִתְחַזֵּקְתִּי אֶת־חַרְבֵּי בָּבֶל וְשִׁבְרָתִי  
אֶת־זִרְעוֹתְּ פְּרֻעָה וְנַאֲקָתָה  
חַלְלָל לְפָנָיו:

25. וְהַחֲזִיקֵתִי אֶת־זִרְעוֹתְּ מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל  
וְזִרְעוֹתְּ פְּרֻעָה תְּפִלְנָה וְנִרְשָׁוּ כִּי  
אָנָּנוּ וְהָנוּ בְּתַחַתִּי חַרְבֵּי בֵּין מֶלֶךְ  
בָּבֶל וּגְטָה אֹתָהּ אֶל־אֶרְץ־מִצְרָיִם:

26. וְהַפְצֹתִי אֶת־מִצְרָיִם בְּגּוּם  
וְנִירִיתִי אֹתָם בְּאָרְצֹות וּבֵרֶשֶׁת  
אָנָּנוּ וְהָנוּ: ס  
לֹא . וְהָיָה בְּאַתְּחַת עִשְׂרָה שָׁנָה  
בְּשִׁלְוִישֵׁי פְּאַחֲרֵי לְחֶרֶשׁ הַיּוֹם רַכְבָּרָה  
וְהָנָה אֱלֹי לְאָמֵר:

*Verses 24–25.* It is His own sword that God will place into the hand of the king of Babylonia. All that Nebuchadnezzar needs to do is to “lower” the sword over the land of Egypt. God will do the rest. Nebuchadnezzar is no less a servant of God than, say, Moses (see Verse 10). **וְנַאֲקָתָה:** Pharaoh must stand by in helpless rage while his great empire collapses. His last anguished sigh will be for the groans of the dying: his nation will bleed to death **לְמַנוּי** before his very eyes. **וּבְכָל אָרֶצָה יַאֲקָת חַלְל** ( ), as in Jeremiah 51,52:).

**Chapter 31, Verses 1–2.** Three months have passed. This is the year of disaster for the Jewish state. Who, then, could still doubt that even Egypt would have to collapse? The might and the “milling throngs” of the Pharaonic empire must not be taken as indications of the empire’s viability. Egypt may compare

2. Son of mankind, say to Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, and to his noisy throng: To whom do you liken yourself in your greatness?

3. Behold, Ashur—a cedar in Lebanon, beautiful in branches, a shade-spreading grove, tall of stature, its crown towered among dense foliage.

4. Waters made it grow, the deep raised it; it had sent forth its streams (of which) one runs round about its plantation and its canals to all the trees of the field.

בָּנֵי אָדָם אָמַר אֶל־פְּרֻעָה מֶלֶךְ־  
מִצְרָיִם וְאֶל־הַמּוֹנוֹ אֶל־מַיִם דָּמִית  
בְּגַדְלָה:

כִּי הַגָּה אֲשׁוֹר אָרוּ בְּלִכְנוֹן יִפְתָּחָה  
עַנְפָּה וְחַרְשָׁה מַצָּל וְגַבְגָּה קַוְמָה וְבָנוֹ  
עַלְתִּים קַוְתָּה צְמַרְתָּה:

דִּמְעָם גַּדְלוּהוּ תְּהִום רַמְסַתָּה  
אַתְּ-גַּנְגְּרָתִית הַלְּבָסְכִּיבּוֹת מַפְתָּחָה  
וְאַתְּ-תַּעֲלָתִית שְׁלָחוֹ אֶל בְּלִיעָצִי  
הַשְּׁרָה:

herself to any great power she chooses, but in each case the Prophet will point to the grave in which these once mighty empires have ended.

*Verse 3.* Let Egypt learn her lesson from the fate of Ashur. Was not Ashur also like a cedar rising proudly to the skies? Indeed, she was a forest of trees spreading their shade far and wide. Did not trees, thick with foliage (עַנְפָּה, see Chapter 19, Verse 11), throng around her and bow before her treetops (עַלְתִּים, see Chapter 17, Verse 3)? שָׂרָה is a forest, as in Isaiah 17,9: מַלְאֵל is the *hiph'il* form of אָלֵל: "to spread shade."

*Verse 4.* Their growth had been promoted by an abundant water supply. They had been nourished by the flood "that lies below" (Genesis 49,25) and that supplies all the rivers and canals on earth. One of these rivers surrounded this forest, apparently favoring, in particular, this one cedar tree (מַטָּה refers to שָׂרָה). It seems it was due to the merits of this cedar that the flood sent the waters of its rivers and canals to all the other trees in the area round about this one cedar. Our interpretation of this verse is based on the fact that the feminine forms all refer to שָׂרָה.

שָׂרָה must be read as a parenthetical phrase; it is reminiscent of שָׂרָה הַלְּבָסְכִּיבּוֹת מַפְתָּחָה (Genesis 2,14)—see *Verse 8*.

Since the Prophet had pictured Ashur's greatness in terms of a proud cedar ruling over "all the trees on earth," it was only natural that he should attribute her greatness to its abundant water supply; cf. Chapters 17 and 19. It was no wonder, then, that Egypt, irrigated by the Nile and crisscrossed by a network of canals, should see her own power in these same terms.

5. Therefore its stature surpassed all the trees of the field, its branches became abundant, its splendid boughs which it sent forth from many waters became long.

6. All the birds of the heavens made their nests in its branches; beneath its splendid branches all the beasts of the field gave birth, and in its shadow dwelled all mighty nations.

7. It became beautiful in its greatness, in the length of its tendrils, for its roots went forth to many waters.

8. Cedars did not overshadow it in the garden of God; cypresses were no match for its branches; there were no chestnut trees to compare with its splendid branches, freely striving outward—no tree in the garden of God could match it for its beauty.

9. It was I Who made it beautiful in the abundance of its tendrils so

5. על-פָּנֵי גְּבֻהָּא קִמְתוֹ מִכֶּל  
עַצְיָה הַשְׁרָה וַתַּרְבֵּנָה סְרֻעָפְתִּיו  
וַתַּאֲרִכְנָה פָּאָרְתָּנוּ מִפְּנִים רְבִים  
בְּשַׁלְחוֹ:

6. בְּסֻעַפְתִּיו כְּגַנְגָּנוּכְּלָעָזָף הַשְׁמִים  
וַתַּחַת פָּאָרְתִּיו יָלָדוּ כָּל חַיָּת  
הַשְׁרָה וּבְצָלִים שָׁבוּכְּלָגְוִים רְבִים:

7. וַיַּעֲשֵׂה בְּגַנְלָלוֹ בְּאָרֶךְ גְּלִיּוֹתָיו כִּי  
הִיא שָׁרְשׁוֹ אֶל-מִים רְבִים:

8. אַרְזִים לְאַשְׁעָמָמוֹ בְּגַן-אֱלֹהִים  
בְּרוֹשִׁים לֹא רַמְזָה אֶל-סְעֻפְתִּיו  
וּעֲרָמְנִים לְאַדְקָיו כְּפָרָאָתִיו כָּל  
עַץ בְּגַן-אֱלֹהִים לְאַדְמָה אֱלֹהִים  
בְּנֶפוּוֹ:

9. זֶהָה עֲשִׂיוֹתָיו בָּרָב גְּלִיּוֹתָיו  
פָּאָרְתִּיו כִּי.

*Verse 5 ff.* The metaphors in these verses, too, are already familiar to us from Chapters 17 and 19. They reflect the commanding position occupied by Ashur in the midst of the nations, (Verse 6) (Verse 6), see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 94,19. On פָּאָרְתִּיו in connection with (Verse 8) as well as עַצְיָה (Verse 7) see Chapter 17, Verse 6.

*Verses 8–9.* עַזְןָן: עַזְןָן אֲשֶׁר בֶּן הַאֲלָקִים denotes the place “which affords man the supreme gratification of his material desires” (Genesis 2,8). God is ready at any time, again and again, to transform the earth into a Garden of Eden for mankind if only men will it, if only they will allow themselves to be planted in God’s Garden by God’s own hand (see Chapter 28). Once this happens, God will command His נַחַת (Verse 4) to send its life-giving waters to these trees. But did it even occur to Ashur that she owed her greatness to

that all trees of Eden that stood in the garden of God envied it.

10. Therefore, thus said my Lord, God Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, because you lifted yourself up arrogantly in your tall stature—and it had extended its crown into the midst of dense foliage, and its towering height caused its heart to become haughty.

11. Therefore, I will deliver it into the hand of the mighty one among the nations so that he may deal with it—I have driven it out in accordance with its wickedness

12. And strangers cut it down, tyrant nations struck it down; its tendrils fell upon the mountains and in all the valleys, and its splendid branches freely striving outward lay broken in all the deep wells of the earth, and all the nations of the earth left its shade and abandoned it.

13. Upon its downfall all the

וַיָּקֹנֵן אֲחָתָה בְּלִעְצֵמָיו עָדָן אֲשֶׁר בָּנָן  
הַאֲלֹהִים: ס

10. לְכָנָן בְּהָה אֶפְרַיִם אַלְגָּן יְהוָה עָשָׂן  
אֲשֶׁר נִבְּחָת בְּקֹטָה וַיִּתְּנוּ צְפָרְתָּה  
אַלְבָּזִין עֲבוֹתִים וַיִּתְּמַלְּכָנָן בְּנֵבָחוֹ:

11. וְאַתָּה נָהָרָה בַּיָּר אַלְגָּן גְּנוּם עָשָׂו  
יְעַשָּׂה לוֹ בְּרִשְׁעָיו נְרִשְׁתָּהוֹ:

12. וַיִּקְרַתְּתָּהוֹ וַיָּרַם עַרְצֵי גְּנוּם  
וַיִּטְשַׁחַד אֶלְהָרִים וּבְכָל־גְּאוֹת  
גַּפְלוּ דְּלִיוֹתָיו וַתִּשְׁבַּרְגֵּן פָּרָאתָיו  
בְּכָל אֲפִיקֵי הָאָרֶץ וַיַּרְאֵוּ מָצָלוֹ  
כְּלִיעְמֵד הָאָרֶץ וַיִּטְשַׁחַד:

13. עַל־מְפָלְתוֹ יִשְׁכַּן כְּלִיעְמָה

God (**ימָה עֲשָׂתָה**) and that it was therefore her duty to place all her resources at His service?

**טָמֵן**, lit., "to darken," "to obscure," see Chapter 28, Verse 3.

Verses 10–11. Israel had only its own attitude, (**Deuteronomy 8, 13–17**) to blame for its expulsion from its Paradise. The Divine decree announcing the end of Ashur is now couched in similar terms. Ashur, too, had only her own **עֲשָׂה** (Verse 11) to blame for her expulsion (**בְּנָשָׁתָה**) from her Garden of Eden.

אַלְגָּן as in Exodus 15,15).

Verses 12–13. By God's command, this proud cedar had to be cut down by an arrogant power that was no better than Ashur. Now the sad remnants of Ashur's former greatness, once the envy and fear of the nations, are scattered

birds of the heavens make their nest and all the beasts of the field flock to its splendid branches freely striving outward.

14. So that none of the trees by the water may raise themselves in their tall stature and extend their crown amidst dense foliage, and their mighty may not stand proudly in their height—are they not all drinkers of water? For they are all doomed to death, to the land of the lowest depths; in the midst of the children of man (they belong) to those destined to go down into the pit.

15. Thus said my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness

השְׁמִים וְאֶל-פְּרָאַתְיוֹ הֵוּ כֵּל  
חַיַּת הַשְּׁרָה:

14. לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לְאָדָּם גִּבְּרוֹ  
בְּקוּמָתָם כָּל-עַצִּים מִלְּאִירָתָם  
אֲתִ-צְמַרְתָּם אֶל-בֵּין עַבְתִּים וְלֹא  
יַעֲמְדוּ אֶלְيָהָם בְּגַבְתָּם כָּל-עַשְׂתִּים  
מִימָּס פְּרִיכָּלָם נָתַנוּ לְקֹמֹת אֶל-אַרְץ  
תְּחִתָּית בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי אָנָם אֶל-יוֹרְדֵי  
כָּורֶס

15. כִּי-הָאָמֵר אָדָן יְהוָה בְּיָמָי  
רַרְתָּו שָׁאוּלָה הַאֲבָלָתִי בְּפָתִי

all over the world. The birds fly away in terror, but once they no longer fear the presence of men, they build their nests (*ישכנו*) upon the "fall" of the erstwhile giant. Meanwhile, the once-resplendent branches offer welcome nourishment for the beasts of the field. *טַבְתָּ* can denote either "to cut down" or "to abandon" or "forsake." *אמְקִים*, see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 18,16 and 42,2.

*Verse 14.* לְמַעַן: Ashur's downfall should convey to all the "trees of the field" (Verse 5) God's warning never to forget that, no matter how tall they become, they will never cease to be "trees of the water;" i.e., that they owe their strength to the water and that even the mightiest treetop will wither when its roots no longer receive nourishment from these waters. Even their "mighty ones" will not cease, even for a moment, to be "drinkers of water" and, like all mortal human beings, they, too, will die as soon as their supply of living waters is cut off. Psalms 1 and 2 have proclaimed to us and to all the nations where they must seek their "progress," (see Hirsch Commentary, *ibid.*) These psalms also spell out the requirements men must meet if they are to remain, for all time, like the tree "which is planted upon brooks of water, which brings forth its fruit in its season and whose leaf does not wither" (Psalms 1,3).

נוֹתָר אָרֶץ חַחְתִּית וּנוֹתָר אָרֶץ חַחְתִּית וּנוֹתָר;

*Verse 15.* הַאֲבָלָתִי: The object is given in the sentence עַלְיוֹ; it is the Lebanon and all the trees of the field. כָּסְתִּי וּנוֹר is a parenthetical phrase

in justice: On the day when it went down into the pit I was wrapped in deep mourning—I had covered it with the deep and restrained its streams, and many waters ceased; on its account did I clothe the Lebanon in blackness; and all the trees of the field grew faint at their sight.

16. I caused nations to tremble at the roar of its downfall, as I lowered it into the pit among those destined to descend into the pit; and in the land of the lowest depth all the trees of Eden took comfort, the choicest and best of Lebanon—drinkers of water, all.

17. Now they also dwell with those who descended into the

עַלְיוֹ אֶת-תְּהוָם וְאִמְגַע גְּרוּתִיחַ  
וַיֵּלְאוּ מִסְרָם רְקִים וְאַקְנָר עַלְיוֹ  
לְכָנוֹן וְלְעַצְיוֹן הַשְׁרָה עַלְיוֹ  
עַלְפָה:

16. סָקוֹל פְּפָלָתוֹ הַרְעִשָּׂתִי נָוִים  
בְּהַרְוָעִי אָתוֹ שָׁאֹולָה אֶת-יְזָרְעָלִי  
בָּרָךְ וַיַּחֲמַד בָּאָרֶץ תְּחִתָּתִי כָּל-  
עַצְיָעָן מִבְּחָר וְטוּבָלְבָנָן כָּל-  
שְׁתִּי מִים:

17. גַּסְדָּהָם אָתוֹ יְרָדוּ שָׁאֹולָה אֶל-

explaining the cause of the mourning. והם: The flood (see our commentary on Verse 4), which until then had given Ashur an ample water supply, was now denied to Ashur because she had failed to recognize the mighty One Who never ceases to command His flood. Ashur had to learn the age-old lesson of history that the same חטא which, on God's command, can transform the earth into a Paradise can also, on a command from God, become destructive (Genesis 7,11) and wipe out a whole generation of corrupt mankind. The flood denied its blessings to Ashur and prepared her grave instead: כתה עליון או בעהות פלך את חטא וכיסך הפטם וחביבם. This interpretation is supported by בעהות פלך in Chapter 26, Verse 19.

Mount Lebanon (אָרֶץ לְבָנָן, Verse 3) will mourn the fall of its magnificent cedar and, for the first time, the "trees of the field" (See Verse 14) which, like Ashur, had long forgotten that they were "trees of the water," will be overcome by a feeling of utter helplessness. שְׁלִפָּה adjective of the verb שְׁלִפָּה, "to grow faint."

*Verses 16–17.* The nations trembled, but when Ashur arrived in the world beyond the grave, she was welcomed with much glorification by the many trees that had come there before her, trees that had lost their own paradise, להט החרב (having fallen to the "flames of the ever-turning sword")

pit to [join] those slain by the sword—"their arm!" in whose shade they once dwelled in the midst of the nations.

**18.** To whom, then, would you liken yourself in majesty and greatness among the trees of Eden? You will descend to the trees of Eden in the land of the lowest depths; among the uncircumcised you will dwell, with those slain by the sword. That is Pharaoh and his noisy throng, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals his loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 32.** 1. It came to pass in the twelfth year, in the twelfth

חַלְיוּ-חָרֶב וּרְעֵשׂ יִשְׁבּוּ בְּצִלּוֹ  
בְּתוֹךְ גּוֹם:

18. אַל־מִי רְמִית נְכָה בְּכֻבוֹד  
וּבְגָנְלָה בְּעַצְיָעָן וּהַזְּרָקָת אֲתָךְ  
עַצְיָעָן אֶל־אָרֶץ תְּחִתָּה בְּתוֹךְ  
עַרְלִים תִּשְׁכַּב אֶת־חַלְיוּ-חָרֶב  
הַזָּא פְּרָעָה וְכָל־הַמּוֹנוֹה נָאָם אַרְגֵּן  
יְהֹוָה: ס

לֹב וְוִיהִי בְּשַׁתִּי עַשְׂרָה שָׁנָה

המחפה (Genesis 3,24) because they had forgotten that they, too, were merely "drinkers of water." Now, גַם הֵם אָחוֹר, now, once again, they were in Ashur's company. We cannot fail to sense the fine irony in the words of greeting with which Isaiah (Chapter 14) has the nations in the netherworld receive Ashur's successor, Babylonia: חָרָעוּ: They look with derision on that once so mighty arm—so, this was the tree under whose shade they once had to grovel for their very survival!

**Verse 18.** So much for Ashur. Now back to Egypt. Does she still wish to compare herself to the exalted position (of Ashur)? No matter what "tree in the Garden of Eden" Egypt might wish to identify, she will find that tree dead and buried. The grave awaits all עַרְלִים who in their lives had failed to understand that their strength lay solely in their ability to exercise moral control in the use of the resources given to them.

**הַזָּא פְּרָעָה:** Such is the fate of Pharaoh; **וְכָל הַמּוֹנוֹה** (note the feminine [weaker] form): under God's sentence, the clamor of Pharaoh's throngs gives way to the eerie quiet of the grave: **נָאָם אַרְגֵּן.**

**Chapter 32, Verses 1–2.** All that now remains for the Prophet is to begin his lament also over Egypt (see our introductory notes to Chapter 27); for Egypt,

month, on the first of the month,  
that the Word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, take up a lamentation over Pharaoh, king of Mitzrayim, and say to him: You rapacious lion among the nations—you have been silenced! You were like a crocodile in the oceans, forcing your way forward in your streams, and you muddied the water with your feet and also soiled its streams.

3. Thus said my Lord, God,  
Who reveals his loving kindness  
in justice; (Therefore) I spread My  
net over you by means of a gathering  
of many nations, and they will  
raise you up with My net.

4. I will cast you down upon  
the earth, I will hurl you upon

בְּשִׁנְיַעֲשֶׂר חֶרֶשׁ בְּאַחֲרֵי חֶרֶשׁ  
הַיְהָה דְּבָרְיוֹתֶךָ אֵלֶּי לְאָמֵר:  
2. בְּנָדְבָרִים שָׂא קָנָה עַל פְּרָעָה  
סְלִידִמְצָרוֹת וְאָמְרָת אַלְיוֹ פְּפִיר  
גּוֹנִים גְּרָקִים נְאָתָה פְּתָגִים בְּיָמִים  
וּפְנִיחָה בְּנָהָרָותִיךְ וְתְּרָלָחָמִים  
בְּרָגְלֵיךְ וְתְּרָפֵס גְּרָרָהָם:

3. בְּהַאֲכָר אַרְגֵּן יְהוָה זָקְנִיאָתִי  
עַלְיָיךְ אַתְּזִדְשָׁתִי בְּקָהָל עַמִּים  
רַבִּים וְהַעֲלָז בְּחָרְמִי:

4. זְנַטְשְׁתִּוּךְ בְּאָרֶץ עַל־פְּנֵי

which had compared herself (**בְּרָא**, Chapter 31,18) to the mightiest of the earth; Egypt, the rapacious lion (**כְּפִיר**, Chapter 19, Verse 2) among the nations, whose roar once filled the world, has fallen silent (**נְדָשִׁת**; note the *hiph' al* form). This monster of the waters, which had lumbered about slowly but menacingly in its rivers (**מִן**, *niph' il* form of **מָנָה**, "to move something from its place with difficulty;" see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 22,10), had managed not only to muddy its own waters but also **סְרָרָהָם** (refers to the **גּוֹנִים**) to dirty the waters of the other nations (**הַלְּאָה**, "to soil") by churning up the mud at the bottom of the rivers (**סְמָמָה**). But the rivers of the earth that are fed by God's **תֹּהַת** were not intended to flow so that men should rob them of their purity (see the preceding chapter; hence the wording here is in logical consequence of **סְמָמָה**, as in Chapter 31 Verse 4,15, and not **סְאָרָיו**, as in Chapter 29, Verse 3). Egypt should have thought of this while there still was time. God will now act to make His rivers pure again (see Verses 13–14).

*Verse 3 ff.* Cf. Chapter 29, Verse 4ff.; **סְרָרָהָם**, "the net," in terms of its ability to "detach" or "to ban" its contents completely from their former location (see Leviticus 27,28).

*Verse 4.* See Chapter 30, Verse 13. **טֹל** a *hiph' il* form, "to cast."

the open field, I will cause all the birds of the heavens to make their nest upon you, and I will cause the beasts of all the earth to be satisfied through you.

5. I will lay your flesh upon the mountains and fill the valleys with your glory that has become food for the worms.

6. I will saturate the earth with that which flows from you: with your blood that (surges) unto the mountains, and the deep springs will be filled with you.

7. And when I shall extinguish you, I will cover the heavens and darken its stars: I will envelop the sun in clouds, and the moon will not shed its light.

8. All the shining light-bearers in the heavens will I darken on your account and set darkness over your land—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

השְׁרָה אֲטִילָה וַהֲשֵׁבֶנְתִּי עַל־<sup>ךְ</sup>  
כָּל־עֹופֵה הַשְׁמִים וַהֲשֵׁבֶעַתִּי מִקְרָב  
חַיִת כָּל־הָאָרֶץ:

5. וַנְתַתִּי אֶת־בָּשָׂרְךָ עַל־הַהֲרִים  
וּמְלָאתִי הַפְּאָיוֹת רַמוֹתֶךָ:

6. וַהֲשִׁקוֹתִי אָרֶץ צְפָתָךְ מִרְקָבֶךָ  
אֶל־הַהֲרִים וְאֶפְקִים יִמְלָאוּן מִפְקָדֶךָ:

7. וְכִסְפִּיתִי בְּכֻבּוֹתֶךָ שְׁמִים  
וְהַקְרֹרְתִּי אֶת־כְּכִיבָּם. שְׁפָשָׁ  
בָּעָגָן אַכְפָּנוּ וַיְרַח לְאַיִלָּאֵר אָרוֹן:

8. כָּל־מְאֹרֶה אֹור בְּשָׁמִים  
אַקְרִירָם עַלְיךָ וַנְתַתִּי חַשָּׁךְ עַל־  
אָרֶץ נָאֵם אַלְגִּי יְהוָה:

*Verse 5.* רַטְוחַךְ: If the mass of corpses that fills the deep valleys seems to rise again (רָוַת), this is due only to the constant motion of the worms produced amidst the decay (for רַקָּה, see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 16,20). Such is the end of a once-great Egyptian empire.

*Verse 6.* צְבָח, derived from צְבַח, "to flow;" in this case, it denotes a "flow" from the body. Until then, the great river of Egypt had made the land fruitful by inundating it at regular periods. Now Egypt's soil will be fertilized by her own blood that will rise up to the hills. For קְרָמָה, see Chapter 31, Verse 12.

*Verses 7–8.* When Egypt's brilliance will fade, the heavens, too, will grow dark. For the downfall of Egypt will expose the impotence of the "Queen of Heaven" before all the world. The once-towering obelisks raised to the "Queen of the Sun" (Jeremiah 43) will lie on the ground, broken. But first the sun must be "turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great

**9.** I will bring grief to the hearts of many nations when I bring (the tidings) of your breaking apart to the nations, into lands that you did not know.

**10.** And I will cause many nations to become stunned at your sight, and at the sight of which their kings will be seized with terror, as I brandish My sword before their faces; and they will tremble for the next moment, each for his own life, on the day of your downfall.

**11.** For thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: The sword of the king of Babylon will come over you.

**12.** With the sword of the mighty one will I bring about the downfall of your noisy throng, tyrant nations all; they will destroy the pride of Mitzrayim and all of its teeming throng will be annihilated.

**13.** I will cause all its animals to vanish from the many waters; the foot of man will no longer muddy

**9.** וְהַכֹּעֵסֶתִי לְבָבָם רַבִּים  
בְּהַכְּיוֹן שָׁבֵךְ בְּגּוֹיִם עַל־אַרְצֹות  
אֲשֶׁר לְאִירְעָתָם:

**10.** וְהַשְׁטוֹתִי עַלְיָק עַמּוּדִים רַבִּים  
וּמִלְכָיוּם וּשְׁעָרוֹן עַלְיָק שַׁעַר  
בְּעֻופְפִי תְּרֵכִי עַל־פְּנֵיָם וּחַרְכִּי  
לְדָגְנִים אִישׁ לְנַפְשׁוֹ בָּיוֹם  
מִפְלָתָה: ס

**11.** בַּיְנָה אָמַר אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה חֶרֶב  
מַלְדָּבָבָל תְּכֹאָה:

**12.** בְּחַרְבּוֹת גְּבוּרִים אָפִיל הַמוֹנָה  
עַרְיוֹצִי נָוָם בְּלָם וּשְׁרֹדוֹ אַתְּגָזָאוֹ  
מָצָרִים וּנְשָׁמָר בְּלַהֲמוֹנָה:

**13.** וְהַאֲכְרַתִי אַתְּכָלְבָהַמְּתָה  
מַעַל פְּנִים רַבִּים לֹא תַּרְלַחַם

and terrible day of the Lord will come" (Joel 3,4). For this reason וְנִתְחַקֵּחַ עַל Egypt, for the second time in her history, had to experience a specific "Egyptian" plague of darkness. תְּחַקֵּק מִצְרַיִם (Verse 10).

*Verses 9–10.* Cf. Chapter 26, Verse 16 and Chapter 27, Verse 35, and our commentary, *ibid.* בְּעַטְמָה: They will feel the sword that had slain Egypt swoop down on their own heads.

*Verse 11.* with suffix, as in Psalms 44,18.

*Verse 12.* שְׂדֵד, to "lay waste" or "to devastate."

*Verse 13.* refers to as well as רַגֵּל אֹתָם: את כל במתה Egypt.

them and the hoofs of animals will no longer muddy them.

**14.** Then I will cause its waters to settle, and I will make its rivers to run like oil, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**15.** When I will turn the land of Mitzrayim into a desolation, the land will be devoid of its former abundance, in that I will smite all its inhabitants—and they will recognize that I am God.

**16.** A song of lamentation it is—they will intone it, the daughters of the nations will intone it; they will intone it over Mitzrayim and its entire noisy throng—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**17.** It came to pass in the twelfth year, on the fifteenth day of (the afore-mentioned) month that the Word of God came to me:

**18.** Son of mankind, wail for the teeming throng of Mitzrayim and

**בְּגָלָּאָרֶם עֹזֶר וִפְרָסּוֹת בַּהֲמָה לֹא  
תְּרַחֲמֵם:**

**14. אֹזֶן אֲשָׁקַעַ מִפְיָהֶם וְגַהְרוֹתָם  
כְּשַׁמְּנוֹ אָוְלֵיךְ נָאָם אַרְצֵנִי יְהֹוָה:**

**15. בְּתַחְתֵּי אַתְּ-אָרֶץ מִצְרָיִם  
שְׁמַמְּמָה וּנוֹשְׁפָה אָרֶץ מִפְלָאָה  
בְּהִכּוֹתִי אֶת-כְּלִיוֹשָׁבֵיכְּךְ וְגַעֲנֵךְ  
כִּירְאָנִי יְהֹוָה:**

**16. קְוִינָה הַיְאָוְקָוְנָה בְּנֹות הַגּוֹיִם  
תְּקֻנָּה אָוֹתָה עַל-מִצְרָיִם עַל-  
כְּלִילָה מְנוֹהָה תְּקֻנָּה אָוֹתָה נָאָם  
אַרְצֵנִי יְהֹוָה: פ**

**17. וַיְהִי בְּשַׁתִּי עֲשָׂרָה שָׁנָה  
בְּחַמְשָׁה עַשֶּׂר לְחַדְשֵׁת הַיּוֹם רַבָּה-  
יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵי לְאַמְרָה:**

**18. בְּנֹ-אָרֶם גַּתָּה עַל-הַמִּזְרָחָן**

will lie desolate; see Chapter 29, Verse 11. סימן רבים: see Chapter 31, Verses 4–5.

*Verse 14.* עַפְשָׁת: “to sink” or “to settle.” The waters that are supplied by God’s נַחַת (Chapter 31, Verse 4) will grow calm again so that the mud churned up by Egypt (Chapter 32, Verse 2) will settle and the waters will be free to flow again, clear, pure and untroubled.

*Verse 16.* The nations, too, will join in this lamentation; cf. our commentary on Chapter 26, Verse 17 and Chapter 27, Verse 32.

*Verses 17–18.* Fifteen days later (וְשָׁמֵל refers to the month indicated in Verse 1) the Prophet sadly buries not only Egypt but also בְּנֹתָה הנְּרָם.

lower it, her and the daughters of mighty nations, in the land of the deepest depth to (join) those who were destined to go down into the pit.

**19.** Whom did you surpass in beauty?—Down with you, and be bedded among the uncircumcised.

**20.** They, too, will fall among those slain by the sword, after she has been delivered to the sword and they will have dragged her down with her teeming throng.

**21.** From the grave the strong among the mighty will speak [of Mitzrayim] and its henchmen:

מִצְרָיִם וּהוֹרְכָהוּ אֶתְּתָה זְבֻנּוֹת  
גַּנוּם אֲדָרָם אֶל-אָרֶץ תְּחִתּוֹת  
אֶת-יְוּרְרֵי בּוֹהַ:

טו. מִפְּנֵי גָּאַמְתָּרְךָה וְשַׁבְּכָה אַתָּה  
עֲרָלוּם:

טז. בְּתוֹךְ חַלְלֵי-חַרְבָּכִים יַפְלֵלְוּ חַרְבָּ  
נְתַנָּה מְשֻׁבָּכוּ אֶתְּתָה וּבְלַיְמָנוֹנִיהָ:

טז. יְדַבְּרוּלְוּ אֱלֹי גְּבוּרִים מִתּוֹךְ

all the "daughter nations" which, only a short time before, had joined in the lamentation over Egypt (Verse 16) but had learned nothing from her downfall. Even this world-shaking event could not effect a change in their basic objectives. Therefore they all, בנות גַּנוּם אֲדָרָם, no matter how mighty they still considered themselves (and how quickly they had forgotten Egypt's fate!), will join Egypt in the grave. The Prophet saw that their might was only that of אֲדָרָם (the incomplete spelling, אֲדָרִים instead of אֲדָרִירִים, indicates that their power was only illusory.)

*Verse 19.* Egypt has no right to expect a fate different from that of the nations that have gone before her; see our commentary on Chapter 31, Verse 18.

*Verse 20.* refers to בְּתוֹךְ נְתַנָּה (Verse 18); they, too, will (ימלו—future term) come to grief some day. refers to Egypt, i.e., after Egypt had fallen victim to this fate. (this refers to עֲרָלוּם) after she had been dragged into the grave by the unstable powers that had gone down before her. see חַלְלֵי-חַרְבָּ, see our commentary on Chapter 31, Verse 17.

*Verse 21.* Egypt will be welcomed to the world beyond the grave by the "great" of the past. They will have a good deal to say openly (לְלֹא—see Rashi) about her. They will usher her to her place among the others present. An impressive gathering, indeed! Places have been reserved also for those that will arrive in the netherworld after Egypt. Egypt will behold them, too, among those that have been slain by the sword. Could the reality of the להט חַרְבָּ

They have gone down, there rest  
the uncircumcised, those slain by  
the sword.

22. There dwells Ashur and its  
entire assembly, its graves are all  
about him; all the slain who must  
fall by the sword;

23. Whose graves were set in  
the deepest depths of the pit; there,  
now, is its assembly, its graves  
surrounding it—all the slain who  
must fall by the sword, who had  
spread crippling terror in the land  
of the living.

24. There dwells Elam and all  
its teeming throng, their grave  
round about—all the slain who  
must fall by the sword, who, being  
uncircumcised, went down in the  
land of the deepest depths, who  
had spread their crippling terror  
in the land of the living and car-  
ried only their shame to those who  
were destined to go down into the  
pit.

25. Among the slain their bed  
was prepared, together with all  
its noisy throng, its graves round  
about—all uncircumcised, slain

שָׁאוֹל אֶת-עֲוֹנוֹ יְרֻדוּ שָׁכְבָו  
הַעֲרָלִים חַלְלִיחָרֶב:

22. שָׁם אֶשְׁוֹר וְכָל-קְתַלָּה  
סְכִיבּוֹתָיו קְבָרָתָיו גָּלָם חַלְלִים  
הַנְּקָלִים בְּחָרֶב:

23. אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ קְבָרָתָיו בְּנִירְכָּמִיד  
בְּזֹר וְוַעֲדָה קְתַלָּה סְכִיבּוֹת קְבָרָתָה  
גָּלָם חַלְלִים נְפָלִים בְּחָרֶב אֲשֶׁר  
נָתַנוּ חַטִּית בְּאָרֶץ חַיִים:

24. שָׁם עַילְםָן וְכָל-גְּמֻונָה סְכִיבּוֹת  
גְּבָרָתָה גָּלָם חַלְלִים הַנְּפָלִים  
בְּחָרֶב אֲשֶׁר-יְרֻדוּ שָׁרְלִים | אֶל-  
אָרֶץ מְחֻתּוֹת אֲשֶׁר נָתַנוּ חַטִּיתָם  
בְּאָרֶץ חַיִים וְיִשְׂאָו בְּלִפְנֵם אֶת-  
יְרֻדי בָּורָה:

25. בְּתֹוךְ חַלְלִים נָתַנוּ מְשַׁכֵּב לְהָ  
בְּכָל-הַמּוֹתָה סְכִיבּוֹתָיו קְבָרָתָה  
גָּלָם אַרְלִים חַלְלִיחָרֶב כִּי

that is the fate of all godless aspirations be portrayed in terms more  
shocking than this?

Verses 22–23. There, in the netherworld, Egypt will meet Ashur. (See  
(note the present tense!) These are powers that were doomed to death by the  
sword from the very beginning. *בְּרוּכִי בָּרוּךְ*: among these is Babylonia (see  
Isaiah 14,15). *חַיִת בָּאָרֶץ הַחַיִם*, see our commentary on Chapter 26, Verses  
17–20.

Verses 24–25. But now Egypt also meets Elam, the empire which, only a  
short time before, had been assigned, together with Media, to put an end to  
Babylonia which had defeated Ashur; (see Isaiah 21,2 and our commentary

by the sword; because their crippling terror spread in the land of the living, they carried their shame to those destined to go down into the pit—it was placed among the slain.

26. There dwells Meshech, Tuval and all their noisy throng, its graves surrounding it; all uncircumcised, slain by the sword, because they spread their crippling terror in the land of the living.

27. But those among the uncircumcised that are destined to fall shall not rest among the mighty, for they went down into the pit with the weapons of their battle and placed their swords beneath their heads; therefore their guilt still clings to their bones, for the crippling terror of the mighty still rages in the land of the living.

28. And yet you will be broken someday in the midst of the uncircumcised and you will rest with those that were slain by the sword.

נִפְנֵן חַטִּיתָם בָּאָרֶץ חַיִם וַיִּשְׁאֹו  
כָּלְמַתָּם אֲתִינּוּרְרִי בָּור בְּתוֹךְ  
מְלֻלִים נִפְנֵן:

26. שָׁם מִשְׁאָךְ תָּבֵל וְכָל־בָּמוֹנוֹתָה  
סְכִיבּוּתָיו קְבָרוֹתָיו גָּלָם עֲרָלִים  
מְתַחְלִילִי תָּרֵבְּ כִּירְגַּתְנָוָה חַטִּיתָם  
בָּאָרֶץ חַיִם:

27. וְלֹא יִשְׁכְּבּוּ אֶת־גְּבוּרִים נִפְלִים  
מְעָרְלִים אַשְׁר וַרְדּוֹר־שָׁאָל בְּכָלִי־  
מְלֻחָמָתָם וַיִּתְנַזֵּן אֲתִיחְרָכּוֹתָם  
תְּחִתְּתָ רַאשֵיכֶם וְתַהֲרִיעַ עַזְנָתָם עַל־  
עַצְמוֹתָם פִּיהְתָּחַת גְּבוּרִים בָּאָרֶץ  
חַיִם:

28. וְאַתָּה בְּתוֹךְ עֲרָלִים תָּשִׁבְךְ  
וְתָשִׁבְךְ אֶת־חַלְלֵי־תָּרֵבְּ:

on Jeremiah 49,34 ff.). From Ashur, Egypt's eye moves directly to Elam. But why does the Prophet say nothing about the fate of Babylonia? If he makes reference to the powers that will defeat Babylonia, we might surely have expected some information about Babylonia herself. We have attempted to explain the Prophet's silence about Babylonia (see our introductory notes). **אֲשֶׁר כָּלְמָתָם:** The greater the triumph of Elam at her conquest of Babylonia, the greater must have been the sense of humiliation that she took with her to her grave. Verse 25 stresses the factors that made it necessary for Elam to be destroyed as well. **בָּהֵקְמַלְלִים נִפְנֵן:** These words are repeated at the end for emphasis. This was the reason why she was doomed from the beginning.

**Verse 26–28.** On Meshech and Tubal, see Chapters 38–39 with reference to the battles against Gog and Magog as described by the Prophet. The ideas to be drawn from these chapters will also help us understand the present verses.

**29.** That is where Edom will be sent: its kings and all its princes who, despite their might, are given among those slain by the sword; they will rest with the uncircumcised, with those destined to go down into the pit.

**30.** That is where all the ennobled of the north and all the Sidonians [were sent] who, despite their crippling terror, went down to the slain, disillusioned over [the loss of] their might: being uncircumcised, they bedded down with those slain by the sword and bore their shame to those destined to go down into the pit.

**31.** Pharaoh will see them and take comfort over all his noisy throng—Pharaoh and his entire army are slain by the sword—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

שְׁפָה אֶרְום מַלְכִיָּה וְכָל־  
נְשִׂיאָה אֲשֶׁר־נָתַנוּ בְּגִבּוּרָתָם  
אֲתִ-חַלְלִי-תְּחִרְבָּה הַפָּה אֲתִ-עַזְרָלִים  
וַיֵּשְׁכְּבֹו אֲתִ-יּוֹרְדִי בָּורָה:

שְׁפָה נְסִיכִי צְפָן גָּלָם וְכָל־  
צָלָג אֲשֶׁר־יָרַדוּ אֲתִ-חַלְלִים  
בְּחִתְּנָתָם מְגִבּוּרָתָם בּוֹשִׁים  
וַיֵּשְׁכְּבֹו עַרְלִים אֲתִ-חַלְלִי-תְּחִרְבָּה  
וַיֵּשְׁאַו כְּלָמָתָם אֲתִ-יּוֹרְדִי בָּורָה:

אוֹתָם יְרָאָה פָּרָעה וְנָחָם עַל־  
כְּלָרְמָנוֹנָה חַלְלִי-תְּחִרְבָּה פָּרָעה וְכָל־  
חוֹלוֹ נָאָם אֶלְגָּנוֹ יְלֻוָּה:

True, Meshech and Tubal have both met their end (Verse 26) but their spirit lives on in Gog and Magog. Meshech and Tubal have taken their sword into the grave with them and placed it beneath their heads. Their sword has not been broken; it lives on in the hands of Gog and Magog. Its terror still prevails on earth, and as long as this continues, the place in the grave next to Meshech and Tubal will remain vacant. But Gog and Magog should not deceive themselves (Verse 28); their turn will come in due time.

**Verses 29–30.** שְׁפָה: The grave is also the destination of Edom. The grave of the Edomites will not save them from sad disillusionment.

**Verse 31.** אֲתִ-יּוֹרְדִי: Let Pharaoh take comfort from this sight; he is neither the first nor the last who will have to pay a heavy price for his madness. טְרֻעָה וְכָל-חִילּוֹ: Even as long ago “Pharaoh and all his hosts” (Exodus 15,4) met their death beneath the waves of the sea, so, too, their remote descendants, victims of the same delusions of grandeur, will be destroyed.

32. For crippling terror have I spread in the land of the living since Pharaoh and all his noisy throng has joined the uncircumcised and those slain by the sword—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 33. 1.** Then the Word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, speak to the sons of your people and say to them: [When] I bring the sword upon a land and the population of the land takes a man from among the most worthy in its midst and appoints him as its watchman;

32. כִּי־רָגַתִּי אֶת־חַיֵּתְךָ בָּאָרֶץ  
חַיִם וּהַשְׁכֵב בַּתּוֹךְ עֲרָלִים אֶת־  
חַלְלֵי־חַרְבָּה פְּרֻעָה וּכְלַיְהוֹמָנוֹת  
גַּם אַרְנֵי יְהוָה: ס

לֹג 1. וַיֹּאמֶר דָּבָר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לְאַמֹּר:  
2. בָּנָדָרִים דָּבָר אֶל־בְּנֵי־עֲמָקָם  
וְאֹמֶרֶת אֲלֵיכֶם אָרֶץ בֵּיאָה  
עַלְיהָ חַרְבָּה וְלֹקַחְוּ עַמְּדָה־אָרֶץ אֲיַשׁ  
אַחֲרֵי מִקְצִים וְנַתְנָהוּ אֹתוֹ לָהּם  
לְצִפְרָה:  
חַתִּיתִי קְרִי.

**Verse 32.** And so, in the final analysis, "his terror" (חַתִּיתָו), which Egypt had spread over the earth for a time, will serve only to reveal the almighty hand of God (חַיָּתוֹ) which knows how to compel even a recalcitrant Egypt to do His homage, even from the grave. What a miserable end for the nation! Note the feminine form of the nation as distinct from in Chapter 31, Verse 2).

Slowly but surely, the flame of the "ever-turning sword" will clear the path upon which, after a long period of estrangement, mankind will find its God again—**בָּאָמֵן**.

**Chapter 33.** The final message from God concerning Egypt (Chapter 32) comes at a time (note the date given in Chapter 32, Verse 1 as distinct from that given in Verse 21 of the present chapter) when the Prophet's impact takes a significant and long-awaited turn.

**Verses 1-9.** Ezekiel receives a new consecration as a prophet; the time has come for him to begin his great work upon the rebirth of God's nation in exile under entirely new circumstances. These verses reiterate in part the same passages (compare Verses 7 to 9 of the present chapter with Verses 17 to 19 of Chapter 3) with which the Prophet had been given the charge as Israel's "watchman" at the very beginning of his mission (see our commentary on

3. And he sees the sword come upon the land and he sounds the shofar and warns the people;

ב. וְרָא אֶת־הַחֶרֶב בָּאָה עַל־

הָאָרֶץ וְתַקֵּעַ בְּשׁוֹפֵר וְהַוִּיר אֶת־

הָעֵם:

4. And if the listener hears the call of the shofar but does not let himself be warned, and the sword then comes and takes him away, then he bears his own blood-guilt.

4. וְשָׁמַע הַשְׁמָע אֶת־קֹל הַשׁוֹפֵר

לֹא נוֹרֵר וּפְכֹא חֶרֶב וְתַקְהָזֶה

רַמּוּ בְּרָאָשׁוּ וְהִיה:

5. For he had heard the call of the shofar but did not let himself be warned, then his blood shall be upon him; if he had let himself be warned, he would have saved his life.

5. אֶת־קֹל הַשׁוֹפֵר שָׁמַע וְלֹא נוֹרֵר

רַמּוּ בָּו וְהִנֵּה וְהִוא נוֹרֵר נֶפֶשׁ

מִלְטָה:

6. But for the watchman who sees the sword approaching and fails to sound the shofar and the people is not warned, and the

6. וְהַצְּפָה כִּי־יָרָא אֶת־הַחֶרֶב

בָּאָה וְלֹא־תַקֵּעַ בְּשׁוֹפֵר וְהָעֵם

Chapter 3, Verses 17 ff.). However, in the present chapter they are preceded by an introduction that must be read against the background of a basic change in the attitude of the people among whom Ezekiel lived. Initially, the Divine summons to serve as *צָוָסָה* had been addressed to him on a strictly personal basis. Even though, very soon, God would command him to fall silent (see our commentary on Verses 24 ff., ibid.), Ezekiel must never forget for a moment that he had been appointed as "watchman" over his people and that this charge entailed certain clear-cut responsibilities. But that first summons had not been intended for his people, who believed that they did not need a "watchman." The Prophet was aware of this fact since he had already heard from the mouth of God what sort of men the *בָּנִים עֲזָקִים* were (Verses 4–11, ibid.).

Our present chapter, however, brings the Prophet closer to the moment when the news of the catastrophe that beset the homeland will "open his mouth" (Verses 21 ff.) and assure him a lasting place as God's Prophet in the midst of his people. Under the impact of these terrible events he no longer had to hesitate before exhorting his people as their "watchman": *רַבָּר אֶל בָּנָי*: (*עֲזָקִים וְאִמְרָתָם אֲלֵיכֶם*) (Verse 2). He no longer had to fear that they might reject him as an irksome observer. For now they themselves can see the "sword of God" looming over their homeland (*כִּי אָבֵא עֲלֵיכֶם חֶרֶב*), and even if God had not expressly appointed him as "watchman" over them, the people themselves would have turned to him, the most noble and valiant man in their midst, for

sword comes and takes even one soul from among them; then it was taken away because of its own evildoing—but it is from the hand of the watchman that I will demand his blood.

7. And as for you, son of mankind, I have appointed you as watchman for the house of Israel—if you will hear a word from My mouth, you must warn them on My behalf.

8. When I say to the evildoer: Evildoer, you must die—and you will not speak to warn the evildoer on account of his ways—then he, being an evildoer, will die in his iniquity, but I will demand his blood from your hand.

9. As for you, if you warned the evildoer on account of his ways to turn back from them, but he refuses to abandon his ways, he will die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your soul.

10. And as for you, son of mankind, speak to the house of

לְאַגְנָהָר וְתִבְוֹא חֶרְבָּוֹת קָחָמָם  
בְּפִשְׁעוֹנוֹ בְּעֻזָּנוֹ גְּלָקָח וְרַכְמָוּמִידָּה  
הַצְּפָה אֲרָדֵשׁ:

7. וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי אָדָם צָפָה נִתְחִיק  
לְבָית וּשְׂרָאֵל וְשִׁמְעָתָה מִפְּיו רַכְבָּר  
וְהַוְּהָרָתָה אַתֶּם מִפְנֵי:

8. קָאָמְרוּ לְרַשְׁעָרְשָׁעַ מוֹתָתָמוֹת  
לֹא רַבְּרַת לְהַזְּהִיר רַשְׁעָמְרָכְבוֹ  
הַוָּא רַשְׁעָבְעֻזָּנוֹ יִמוֹת וְרַכְמָוּמִידָּה:  
אֲבָקָשׁ:

9. וְאַתָּה כִּירְהַזְּהָרָתָה רַשְׁעָמְרָכְבוֹ  
לְשׁוֹבֵם מִפְּנֵיהֶן וְלֹא־שָׁב מְרַרְבָּנוֹ הוּא  
בְּעֻזָּנוֹ יִמוֹת וְאַתָּה נִפְשָׁע הַאֲלָתָה:

10. וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי אָדָם אָמַר אַל־בִּיאָת

לְקֹחוּ פָם הָאָרֶץ וְגֹרֵנוּ אֹתוֹ לְצַדָּה:  
מִקְדָּמָה, see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 19:4: this term may refer to the lowest or the highest of the social classes; here, it denotes the latter.

Ezekiel becomes increasingly aware of the problems and responsibilities entailed in his mission as the "watchman" over his people. His people need him now more than ever before. God has appointed the sword (Verse 2), but at the same time He has appointed the watchman who is to give his people one last chance to escape death. For God wants His people to survive. Woe to the watchman who, given such circumstances, would fail his task; see our commentary on Chapter 3, Verses 17–19.

*Verse 10.* The present verse harks back to the admonition in the preceding verse according to which it is Ezekiel's duty to save the sinners. It reflects the

Israel—this is what you will say: Upon us is the burden of our iniquities and our sins, and we rot away in them—how, then, can we gain life?

**11.** Say to them: As I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—I do not demand the death of the evildoer; let the evildoer rather turn from his ways—and live! Turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why should you want to die, house of Israel!

**12.** And as for you, son of mankind, speak to the sons of your people: The righteous man's devotion to duty will not save him on

וְשָׂרֵל בֶּן אָמְרַתֶּם לְאֹמֵר כִּי  
פְּשֻׁעָינוּ וְחַטֹּאתָינוּ עֲלָנוּ וּבָעַם  
אֲנַחֲנוּ נְמַקִּים וְאַזְיקָנָהָה:

וְאֹמֵר אֲלֵיכֶם חִידָּאַנִּי | נָאַם |  
אֲלֹנִי וְלֹהֶה אַסְ-אַחֲפֵץ בְּמִזְרָחַ  
הַרְשָׁעַ קַי אַסְ-בְּשׁוּב רְשַׁע מַדְרַכְבָּ  
וְרוּחָ שָׁבוּ שָׁבוּ כַּדְרַכְבָּ  
הַרְעִים וְלֹפֶת תִּמְוֹתָה בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: פ

וְאַתָּה בְּנֵדָרֶם אֹמֵר אֲלֵבְנִי  
עַמְקָ צְדָקָת הַצְדִיק לֹא תִצְלִינָה

mood that prevailed in the *golah* while the fate of the Jewish state at home was sealed. Gone was the blind trust in the words of false prophets. Under the overwhelming impact of the events that confirmed the truth of the Word of God which they had disregarded for so long, the people in exile fell into a deep depression. Aware of the heavy burden of guilt they had accumulated, they no longer dared to hope for a better future. They saw themselves decay under the burden of their sins (see our commentary on Chapter 24, Verse 23). Of what good was a "watchman" to them now when it was already too late? (Accordingly, we can understand why this verse deals only with the watchman's duty to save the sinner, with no mention at all (at least not here) of the *צדיק צדיק* who has sinned (Chapter 3, Verses 20–21) which should be no less the watchman's concern. For the moment, the most important thing is to save the *רשע*.)

*Verses 11 ff.* The Prophet is told that it is now his sacred duty to impress upon his *golah* the message of the inexhaustible mercy of the "living" God. We are already familiar with this message from Ezekiel's previous utterances; see our notes on Chapter 18.

*Verse 11.* See Chapter 18, Verse 23 and Chapters 31–32, and our commentary, *ibid.* You need not "rot" in the grave (Verse 10). If you will it, you can live!

*Verses 12–13.* Past acts of righteousness cannot mitigate the guilt of the former *רִשָּׁע* before his God (see Chapter 3, Verse 20). On the other hand, let

the day of his crime, and the evil of the evildoer, it will not cause his downfall on the day when he abandons his evildoing. The righteous, he will not live on account of it, on the day of his sin.

13. If I say of the righteous man that he shall live, but he, confident of his devotion to duty, does evil—then all of his righteous acts will not be considered, and as for his iniquity which he has committed, he will die because of it.

14. And if I say of the evildoer, you must die—but then he abandons his sin and practices justice and loving kindness:

15. He restores his pledge—the evildoer pays for the robbery, he walks in the laws of life, not to do any more wrong, then he shall live, not die!

בַּיּוֹם פָּשְׁעָו וּרְשֵׁעָת הַרְשֵׁעַ לֹא־  
יִכְשֶׁל בָּהּ בַּיּוֹם שָׁבוּם מְרָשְׁעָו  
וְצַדִּיק לֹא יוּכֶל לְחַיּוֹת בָּהּ בַּיּוֹם  
חַטָּאתָו:

13. בְּאַמְרֵי לְצַדִּיק חַיָּה יְחִיָּה  
וְהַוְא־בְּפָתֵח עַל־צְדָקָתוֹ וּמְעָשָׂה עַל־  
כָּל־צְדָקָתוֹ לֹא תִּזְכְּרָנָה וּבְעַל־  
אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂה בּוֹ יְמוֹתָה:

14. וּבְאַמְרֵי לְרָשָׁע מוֹת תְּקֹמָה  
וּשְׁבָ מְחַטָּאתָו וּמְעָשָׂה מְשֻׁפֵּט  
וְצְדָקָה:

15. חַבֵּל יִשְׁיב רָשָׁע גַּזְלָה וִשְׁלָם  
בְּחַקּוֹת הַחַיִּים הַלְּךָ לְבָלָתִי עֲשֹׂות  
עַל חַיוֹת יְחִיָּה לֹא יְמוֹתָה:

צְדָקָתוֹ קָרֵי.

not the repentant sinner think that his past transgressions will prevent him from ascending to a better future. The words **וזדיק לא יוכל** (Verse 12) begin the development of the first thought. **בָּהּ** refers to **צדקה**. In Verse 12 the expression is **בַּיּוֹם פָּשְׁעָו**; **בַּיּוֹם שָׁבוּם** comes second. This is to imply that in the case of a **צדיק** whose life served as an example to his fellow men, any thoughtless transgression (**חטא**) becomes an highly irresponsible act, a crime (**פָשׁע**); see Chapter 18, Verse 24.

*Verses 14–15.* **מְשֻׁפֵּט וְצְדָקָה**, see Chapter 18, Verses 5 ff. **חַבֵּל יִשְׁיב רָשָׁע**: These verses refer to one who until now has been a **רשע** but is starting a new life by seeking to make amends for the wrong he has done to his fellow men (hence two specific kinds of transgression are singled out here; cf. Chapter 18, Verse 7). He is now determined to follow the guidance of God's **וראות**, realizing that they alone can bestow true life upon him. Knowing this, he regards all the commandments of God as **וראות מְקוֹם** (see our commentary on Chapter 18, Verses 10 and 17). At the same time he now understands that only the

**16.** All his sins that he has committed will not be remembered for him; justice and loving kindness does he practice; he shall live.

16. בְּלֹתָה אֲתָּה אֲשֶׁר חִטָּא לֹא תִּזְכְּרָנָה לוֹ מִשְׁפָּט וַצְדָּקָה עֲשָׂה חֵיו יְחִיָּה:

**17.** The sons of your people, of course, say that the way of my Lord is not right, when it is they, their way that is not right!

17. וְאַקְרָבָן בָּנָי עַמְּךָ לֹא וַתִּכְנַן גָּדָךְ אָרְנוּ וַחֲפַה וַרְעָם לְאִיזְכָּנָן:

**18.** If the righteous man turns away from his devotion to duty and is guilty of abuse of power, then he will die because of it;

18. בַּשּׁוֹבֵצְרִיק מִצְרָקָתוֹ וְעַשָּׂה עַול וִמְתַת בָּהָם:

**19.** And if the evildoer turns away from his wickedness and practices justice and the duty of loving kindness, he will gain life as a result.

19. וְבַשּׁוֹבֵ רְשָׁעָ מִרְשָׁעָתוֹ וְעַשָּׂה מִשְׁפָּט וַצְדָּקָה עַלְיָם הוּא יְחִיָּה:

**20.** And still you say: The way of my Lord is not right. I will judge each one of you according to his ways, house of Israel!

20. וְאַמְرָתֶם לֹא וַתִּכְנַן גָּדָךְ אָרְנוּ אִישׁ כְּרָכְיוֹ אַשְׁפּוֹת אַתָּכְם בֵּית וִשְׁרָאֵל: ס

**21.** And it came to pass in the twelfth year, in the tenth (month),

21. וַיְהִי בָּשְׁתִּי עַשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה הַסְּמָתָאתוֹ קָרֵי.

scrupulous observance of God's **חוקים** can save a man from becoming guilty of **צל** in one's social relationships. When **חוקים** are disregarded, will suffer.

*Verse 16.* Who can fathom the infinite mercy in which God spreads the "cover" of atonement over a sinful past? In His eyes the deliberate crimes of a lifetime become no more than unintentional errors (in Chapter 18, 22 the text reads **בְּשֻׁעָיו** אשר עֲשָׂה, while here it reads **בְּלֹתָה** אשר עֲשָׂה—and even **חִטָּא**) as soon as the person shows a sincere resolve to mend his ways. Eventually, as he becomes faithful to his God-ordained duties, God turns to him with full approval and favor, as if he had practiced only justice and righteousness all his life. "Great is the power of repentance; purposeful iniquities are transformed into acts of merit" (**ירומא** 10).

*Verses 17–20.* See Chapter 18, Verses 25–29 and our commentary, *ibid.* **בָּנָי** (Verse 18) relates also to **צְרוּקָתוֹ**; see Chapter 18, Verse 26.

*Verses 21–22.* Then came the long-awaited turning point in the Prophet's

on the fifth of the month of our exile, that a refugee from Yerushalayim came to me with the message: The city has been conquered!

22. But the hand of God had already been upon me in the evening, before the refugee came; it had opened my mouth until he came to me in the morning. And so my mouth was opened and I no longer needed to be silent.

23. Then the Word of God came to me:

24. Son of mankind, the inhabitants in these ruins on the soil of Israel say: One only was Abraham and he took possession of the

בְּעַשְׁרֵי בְּחִמָּשָׁה לְחֶרֶשׁ  
לְגִלְוָתָנוּ בְּאַדְ-אַלִי הַפְּלִיטָ  
מִירוֹשָׁלָם לְאמֹר הַכְּתָה הַעִירָה:

22. וַיַּדְרֹזְרֹזָה הַיּוֹתָה אֲלִי בְּעַרְבָּ  
לְפִנֵּי בּוֹא הַפְּלִיטָ וַיַּפְּתַח אַתְּ-פִּי  
עֲדָ-בּוֹא אֲלִי בְּבָקָר וַיַּפְּתַח פִּוְנָלָ  
בְּאַלְמָתִי עֹוד: פ

23. וַיֹּהֵי דְבָרָיוֹתָה אֲלִי לְאמֹר:

24. בְּנֵרָאָם יִשְׁכְּבִי הַחֲרֻכּוֹת  
הַאֲלָה עַל-אַרְמָת יִשְׂרָאֵל אַמְרִים  
לְאמֹר אַחֲרֵן כִּי אַבְרָהָם

mission (see our notes on Chapter 24, Verse 27). It was a moment for which he had yearned and which did not find him unprepared. It had been foreshadowed even in his earlier message to his people (Verses 2-20). Already "in the evening before" his mouth had been opened and his people had listened to him. He was able to receive the refugee "with his mouth opened;" he no longer had to keep silent.—Regarding the date of Verse 21, see our commentary on Chapter 26, Verse 1.

Verse 24. His first words are addressed to those victims of a tragic illusion who, even as they sat amidst the ruins of their homeland, still dreamed of independence. After the terrible experiences they had undergone, they still clung to the hope that, some day, they would be able to shake off the enemy's yoke by their own strength. These were the pitiful survivors whose governor Gedaliah became and whose own tragedy is recorded in Chapters 40-44 of the Book of Jeremiah. Why, they asked themselves, should they give up hope? Their ancestor Abraham had been only one man and yet he had dared lay claim to this land. Seeing that they were many more than only one, could they not claim their title at least as easily as Abraham? But they had forgotten that it was God who had promised this land to Abraham (Genesis 15.7). They did not consider whether they had fulfilled the conditions under which their ancestor had been promised the possession of this land. This is the reality of which the Prophet, far away from the homeland, had to remind them. Not that

land—but we are numerous, we have been given the land as an inheritance.

**25.** Therefore say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: You are eating in the presence of blood; you lift your eyes to your abominations and you shed blood—and yet you would want to take possession of the land?

**26.** You stand upon your sword, commit abominations and every one defiles the wife of his neighbor—and yet you would take possession of the land?

וירש את-הארץ ואנחנו רביים  
לנו נתנה הארץ למורשה: ס

25. לכן אמר אליהם ביה-אמד  
ארני יתולה על-הרים | תאכלו  
מעינכם תשאו אל-גלויכם ורעם  
תשפכו והארץ תירשו:

26. עמרתם על-חרבכם עשיתן  
תולבה ואיש את-אשת רעה  
טמאתם והארץ תירשו: ס

they listened to his words. After all, they had not even listened to the words of Jeremiah, who had not gone into exile but had chosen to remain in their midst. However, the same illusion might have taken hold also in the *golah*, and the Prophet would have to deal with that before he could begin his work on the moral rebirth of his people both at home and in exile.

*Verse 25.* They aspire to possess the land, but they have done everything imaginable to forfeit their title to it. Or was the record of their crimes and transgressions not sufficient to make the land “vomit them out”? *על הדם חאכלו אכילה אל ההרים* (see Chapter 18, Verse 6 and our commentary, *ibid.*)

*Verse 26.* **עמרותם על חרבכם:** Putting their trust in the power of their sword, they thought they were “strong” enough to be able to prove their male prowess by violating the wives of their neighbors.

**עשיתן חרבה:** note the feminine form; they have only themselves to blame for the loss of their power.

**ונרדם על חרבכם:** The Prophet could have had Chapter 19 of Leviticus in mind as he spoke (cf. *על הדם חאכלו על צבתו לא צבטו* refers to the prohibition in Leviticus 19: You must not remain indifferent to any blood that has been shed even when it was spilled through no fault of yours. *ונרדם משפכו:* But they actually spilled blood and stood idly by, holding their sword that had shed the blood—all without the slightest fear or remorse. Their sword gave them an illusion of security).

27. Say this to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: As I live, those who are (hiding) among the ruins shall fall by the sword; those that are in the open field I have given to the beasts as their food; and those in fortresses and caves shall die of the pestilence.

28. And I will give the land to desolation and horror, and the pride of its power will vanish, and the mountains of Israel will turn numb in desolation since no one passes by.

29. And they will recognize that I am God when I have turned the land into a desolation and a horror because of all their abominations which they have committed.

30. As for you, son of mankind, regarding the sons of your people who take counsel against you at

27. כה-תאמר אֶלָּם כִּי-אָמַר  
אָלְנוּ יְהוָה מֵרָאַנִּי אַסְלָא אֲשֶׁר  
בְּחַרְבוֹת בְּחַרְבָּה יִפְלֹא וְאֲשֶׁר עַל-  
פָּנֵי הַשְּׁרָה לְחִיה נִתְתִּיו לְאַכְלָו  
וְאֲשֶׁר בְּקָצְרוֹת וּבְמֻעָרֹת בְּרַכְבָּר  
מוות:

28. וְגַתְתִּי אֶת-הָאָרֶץ שְׁמַךְ  
וּמִשְׁפָּה וּגְשֻׁבָּת גָּאוֹן אָזָה וְשְׁמַמְנוֹ  
הָרִי וּשְׂרָאֵל מֵאַין עֹבָר:

29. וְוַרְעַו בַּיָּדָנִי יְהוָה בְּתַתִּי אֶת-  
הָאָרֶץ שְׁמַךְ וּמִשְׁפָּה עַל כָּל  
תוֹעַלְתֶּם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ ס

30. וְאַתָּה בְּזִדְאָרָם בְּנֵי עַמְּךָ  
הַגְּרָבִים בְּקֶדֶם אֶצְלָן קִירּוֹת

*Verses 27–29.* This mindless nation will have to endure even more horrors before it will begin to understand the Divine lesson of the holocaust. When the "hills of Israel," which they worshipped, will be utterly desolate (see Chapter 6) and the people have lost all that which, in their folly, they regarded as the "pride of their strength," they may truly lament the blindness that had prevented them from recognizing the true *One* (see Chapter 24, Verse 21) before it had become too late.

*Verse 30.* Indeed, it would have been a miracle if the opposition the Prophet encountered in the midst of his *golah* would suddenly have given way to a high resolve to obey only the Word of God. If disobedience could persist on the sacred soil of the nation even after the catastrophe had struck, certainly nothing better could have been expected to happen in the *golah*. The rebellious attitude that prevailed among these victims of sad delusion had supporters even among those who had gone into exile. Actually, it was remarkable that,

the walls and at the entrances to the houses, and one speaks to the other, each one to his brother: Do come and hear what is the word that goes forth from God;

**31.** And they come to you as the people gather and they sit before you—as *My* people, and they do hear your words but do not act in accordance with them, for they act in accordance with the songs in their mouths, for their heart's longing is for (what they believe to be) their advantage.

**32.** And thus you are to them as if it were a love song, of pleasant voice, one who plays well; they hear your words but they do not act accordingly;

ובפתחי הפתים ודבריך את־  
אחד איש אחד לאמר באז־  
נָא ושמעו מָה תֹּרְכֶּר הַיֹּצֵא  
מִאַת יְהוָה:

וז. ויבאו אליך כמבוא־עַס ווישׁו  
לפניך עמי ושמעו את־דבריך  
ואותם לא ייעשו כירצחים  
בפיהם הפה עושים אחני בצעם  
לבם هلך:

32. והגַּע לָהֶם כְּשִׁיר עֲנָבִים יִפְהַ  
קָול וּמִטְבָּה נָגָן וְשָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דְּבָרֵיכֶם  
עוֹשִׂים אַינָם אֹתָם:

under the impact of the tragic tidings from the homeland, these elements at least did not voice open opposition to the prophecies of Ezekiel and were content merely to discuss their "personal" opinions quietly with those whom they could expect to agree with them (ודבר חר אהד איש אהיו לאמר). But then it is quite understandable why they at least lent an ear to the Divine message proclaimed by Ezekiel.

*Verse 31.* And so one could see them mingling with the crowds that pressed close to the Prophet, pretending to listen to his exhortations. Anyone who saw them thus would surely have thought that they must be among the loyal members of "God's nation," יִשְׂרָאֵל פְנֵיךְ עַמִּי. But in fact they still listened to "words" that were more in accord with their own desires (עֲנָבִים, see Chapter 23, Verse 5) and to whose fulfillment they were ready to devote all their energies. They still believed that their salvation lay along paths different from those shown them by the Prophet.

*Verse 32.* To them, the words of the Prophet were only words. They listened to the exhortations of the Prophet, his summons to a new life, as they might have to songs of love. They listened to them; they might even have allowed themselves to be moved by them for a fleeting moment, but they did not let his words alter their ways.

33. Yet, when it comes to pass—for, behold, it will come to pass—they will recognize that there was a prophet in their midst.

**Chap. 34.** 1. Then the Word of God came to me:

2. Son of mankind, pronounce your prophetic word over the shepherds of Israel and say to them, to the shepherds: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals his loving kindness in justice: Woe to the shepherds of Israel that have grazed themselves! It is the shepherds that should be grazing their flock!

33. זְכַרְתָּה הַנֶּה בָּאָה וַיַּרְא פִּי  
גַּבְיוֹן תְּוֹכֵם: ס

לֹר יְ וַיְהִי רַבְּרִירָה אֱלֹי לְאָמָר:

2. בָּנֵי אָדָם הַצְבָּא עַל־רְעֵנִי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל הַנְּבָא וְאַפְרַת אֲלֵיכֶם  
לְרַעֲיוֹנִים כִּיהְרָא כִּיהְרָא כִּיהְרָא  
רְעֵנִים כִּיהְרָא לְאַשְׁר־הַיּוֹרְעִים אֲוֹתָם  
בְּלֹא הַצָּאן יְרַשׁ הַרְעִים:

**Verse 33.** וְכֹבֵחַ: Only when the wretched remnant of the deluded will have received their just punishments and the homeland will in fact present the gruesome picture sketched by Ezekiel with such frightening clarity (Verses 27–28) will the Prophet also become their נְבִיא, a “vessel of the Word of God” that seeks not merely to stir up emotions but to guide mankind to the road which leads to true salvation.

**Chapter 34.** This chapter outlines the wondrous design whose realization God had announced at the very hour that Israel was dispersed among the nations: that the people of Israel will gather around their Divine Shepherd and accept His guidance. The Jewish people would have been spared untold sufferings if they had put their trust only in leaders who regarded themselves merely as “shepherds” in the service of God and who would never have kept the people away from that true “pasture” which was intended to nourish them throughout their lives. It was the misfortune of the Jewish people in Ezekiel’s day that they followed “evil shepherds” who jeopardized the most sacred interests of their flock. God declared that He would not permit this to go on indefinitely. His own objectives would ultimately be achieved.

**Verse 2.** It is to these evil shepherds, before anyone else, that the Prophet’s warnings are addressed. These individuals were out solely for personal gain, even if the flock entrusted to their care would perish as a result. We need only

3. You eat of the best and clothe yourselves with the wool; you slaughter the healthy but you do not graze the flock.

4. You have not strengthened the weak nor healed the sick, nor bound up that which was broken, neither did you bring back that which went astray nor sought that which was lost—you ruled over them with force, with crushing harshness!

5. And so they were dispersed since they had no shepherd, and they became food for all the beasts of the field when they were dispersed.

ב. אַתְּ־הַתְּלִבָּב תֹּאכְלُו וְאַתְּ־הַצְּמַר תְּלִבָּשׁוּ הַכְּרִיאָה מִזְבְּחוּ הַצָּאן  
לֹא תְּרֻעָה:

ג. אַתְּ־הַנְּחָלוֹת לֹא חִזְקָתֶם וְאַתְּ  
הַחֲולָה לֹא־דָּפָאתֶם וְלֹגְשָׁבֶרֶת  
לֹא חִבְשָׁתֶם וְאַתְּ־הַגְּלָחָת לֹא  
בְּשִׁבְתֶּם וְאַתְּ־הַאֲבָרָת לֹא  
בְּקִשְׁתֶּם וְבְּחִזְקָה דָּרִיתֶם אַתֶּם  
וּבְפִרְךָ:

ד. וְתִפְצִינָה מִבְּלִי רָעוֹת וְתִהְיָנָה  
לְאַכְלָה לְכָלְחִית הַשְׂרָה  
וְתִפְצִינָה:

recall the characterization of the “prophets of Israel” in Chapter 13. These pseudo-prophets won to their side the kings, the priests and the princes of Israel whose conscience Jeremiah had vainly sought to arouse (see Jeremiah, Chapter 23).

*Verse 3.* חַלְבָּן in this context denotes the best, the most precious part, as in חַלְבָּן אֶת חַלְבָּן הָאָרֶץ (Genesis 4,4) and מִבְּרוֹת צָנוֹן וּמִתְּלִיבָּן (Genesis 45,18). אַכְלָה in the present verse, too, should be interpreted to mean that the best part of the flock had to be sacrificed to their selfish ambitions.

*Verse 4.* These images of pastoral life show the many tasks devolving upon a leader who truly cares for his people. הַנְּחָלָה is a *niph'al* form of חַלְה: He knows how to seek out those that have gone astray (cf. Deuteronomy 22,1) and to guide them back onto the right path. He does not give up searching even for those that seem to be lost beyond recall (*הַאֲבָדָה*). But the shepherds of the Jewish people in the days of Ezekiel showed no such dedication to their calling.

ברוגה: Not even the harsh regime of the Pharaohs could have done greater damage to the moral fiber of the Jewish people.

תְּלִבָּב: see Exodus 1,13.

*Verse 5.* Betrayed by those whom they had regarded as their shepherds.

6. Thus they who are My flock stray about on all the mountains and on every high hill, dispersed over all the surface of the earth, they who should have been My flock—there is none who cares, none who searches!

7. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of God:

8. As I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, since My flock became a prey, My flock became food for all the beasts of the field, because there was no shepherd, and My shepherds did not care about My

וְיִשְׁגַּבְנָו צָאָנוּ בְּכָל־גָּתָרָהִים וְעַל  
כָּל־גָּבְעָה רַמָּה וְעַל בְּלֵפָנֵי הָאָרֶץ  
נִפְצֹצָאָנוּ וְאִין דָּרְשׁוּ אִין סְבָכָשׁ:

וְלֹכְן רְعִים שָׁמְעוּ אֶת־דָּבָר  
יְהֹוָה:

ז תִּרְאָנִי נָאָם | אֲלֹנִי יְהֹוָה אָסָּם  
לֹא יִשְׁעַן הַיוֹתִצְאָנוּ | לְבָבוֹת הַיּוֹנָה  
צָאָנוּ לְאַלְהָה לְכָל־חַיָּת הַשָּׂדָה  
מְאַיִן רָעָה וְלֹא־דָרְשׁוּ רָעִי אַתָּה

the people were like sheep roaming the world without a leader to guide them. חַפְצָה: once they are dispersed they fall easy prey to their enemies.

*Verse 6.* שָׁגָן, as opposed to שָׁגָן, denotes an error in theory; i.e., a wrong turn in thinking (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 4,13). Now the scene shifts to "all the mountains and every high hill" on which the people, betrayed and abandoned by their leaders, wander about in total confusion. They ask for favors before any great power they see. But when they have thrown away their own dignity and sacrificed all their own sacred ideals to these "mountains and hills" they find themselves pitifully disillusioned, helpless and dispersed all over the world. Such is צָאָנוּ, as this verse sorrowfully reiterates; such is "My flock," God's own flock, which God Himself had chosen to submit completely to His guidance so that it might consciously and purposefully run the course of its God-ordained history.

חַדְשָׁן וְאַזְמָנָה מִבְּקָשׁ: Is there, indeed, no one left to take up the cause of God's own flock?

הַרְמָתָה, נִבְעָה are used here as metaphors for political and military powers; cf. Jeremiah 3,23 et al. שָׁרֵן denotes "to look for" or "to look out for" a person or an answer; see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 11,12.

*Verses 7–10.* God will look out for His flock and will liberate it from its contemptible shepherds (Verse 10). Their own supposed "shepherds" have done them more damage and claimed far more victims from among them than

flock, and the shepherds grazed themselves but did not graze My flock—

9. Therefore, you shepherds, hear the Word of God:

10. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I am turning to the shepherds and I will demand My flock from their hand, and I will see to it that they cease grazing a flock; they shall no longer be shepherds who graze only themselves, and I will rescue My flock from their jaws and it will no longer serve as fodder for them.

11. For thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I am here! I am searching for My flock and I will tend it with care.

12. Even as the shepherd tends his flock with care on the day when

**צָאַנְיִ וַיַּרְאֻנְוּ הַרְעִים אֹתָם וְאֶת־  
צָאַנְיִ לְאַרְעָה ס**

9. **לְכָן הַרְעִים שְׁמַעְנּוּ רַבְּרִירָה:**

10. **כִּהְאָמַר אֲלֹנֵי יְהוָה הָנָנִי אֶל־  
הַרְעִים וְרַשְׁתִּי אֶת־צָאַנְיִ מִינְעָם  
וְהַשְׁבְּתִים מִרְעָות צָאַן וְלֹא־יַרְעָנָה  
שָׂדֵה קָרְעָם אֹתָם וְהַלְּתִי צָאַנְיִ  
כְּפִירָסְתָּלָאַתְּהִינְג לְהַסְלָאַקְלָה:**

11. **כִּי כָּה אָמַר אֲלֹנֵי יְהוָה הָנָנִי  
אֲנַי וְרַשְׁתִּי אֶת־צָאַנְיִ וְבְקָרְתִּים:**

12. **כְּבָקָרְתִּ רַעַה עַרְדוּ בְּיוֹם־**

did the "beasts of the field" (Verse 8) and the hatred of the nations. The pages of Jewish history present a stark record of these sufferings.

*Verses 11–12.* **הַנְּגִי אַנְי:** God Himself is present, "searching for His flock." He Himself will step into their midst and His call will go forth to each and every one of them, summoning them all to gather around Him once more. All of them are equally dear to Him; he bestows His "personal care and concern" upon each and every one of them. This is the meaning also of **בָּקָר;** see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 19,20. **נוֹשָׁח,** "to spread out," refers to a flock that has been scattered all over (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 24,12).

God will call to Himself those that broke away from Him in the day of "thick clouds and mist," at the time of the "storm that shook the world," when, more than ever before, they should have kept close to their Shepherd. But they said: Since we saw all the others (i.e., all the nations) running away from their shepherds, we, too, left our Shepherd. Seeing all the others abandon their

he comes into the midst of his sheep that have gone astray, so will I tend My flock with care and I will rescue it from wherever it is dispersed on the day of clouds and fog.

13. And I will bring them out from among the nations and I will gather them from the lands, and I will bring them home to their native soil and graze them towards the mountains of Israel by the deep wells and in all dwelling places of the land.

14. I will graze them in a good pasture and upon the hills of Israel's heights will be their abode;

הִיּוֹתָו בַּתְּזַקְּדֵצָאנוֹ נֶפֶרְשׁוֹת כֵּן  
אֲבָקָר אֶת־צָאנוֹ וְהַלְּטוֹנִי אֶת־הָם  
מִפְּלִילַהֲמֻמָּת אֲשֶׁר גַּפְצָו שָׁם  
בַּיּוֹם עַזְּנֵן וְעַרְפֵּל:

13. וְהַזְּאוֹתִים מִזְּדִידְרַעֲמִים  
וְקַבְצָתִים מִזְּדִידְנָאָרְצָות  
וּבְכִיאָתִים אֶלְלִידְאָרְמָתָם  
וְרַעֲנִיתִים אֶלְלִידְרַכְיִי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
בְּאָפִיקִים וּבְכָל מַשְׁבֵּיכִי הָאָרֶץ:

14. בְּמֶרְעָה־טֹוב אָרְעָה אַתָּם  
וּבְהַרְיִ קְרוּסִים יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִנֵּה גַּוְתָּם

sheepfolds, we, too, no longer felt secure in our pen. Seeing the others casting about for a new shepherd and new pastures, we, too, thought that we must find a new shepherd and new pastures. And now we are wandering about, along with the others, without joy, without rest and without roots (see also *Collected Writings*, Vol. II p. 94–95).

*Verses 13–14.* But eventually they will heed the call of God, and He will lead them back to their homeland. God will lead them to pasture "toward the mountains of Israel." Only if God Himself will feed them at the wellspring and dwellings of their land, the people are told, will they be able to return to those "mountains of Israel" from which God Himself had removed them and which God had turned into a wilderness since the people had foolishly worshipped them as gods and looked to them for the strength of their life. God will lead them to a "good pasture" and they will find it upon "the mountains of the high place of Israel." The high place of Zion (this is מְרַת יִשְׂרָאֵל, see our notes on Chapter 17, Verse 23), the mountain before which all the other hills readily bend the knee (הר בֵּית הַבָּרֶשׂ הַהֲרָטִים, Isaiah 2.2) in order to raise it on high upon their own shoulders, will give them everything that is truly good. This is the only place where they will be able to come to rest at last and obtain the nourishment that no other pasture, no matter how lush, could provide for them. Even though they temporarily live in בְּכָל מַשְׁבֵּיכִי הָאָרֶץ, their permanent dwelling place will always be the mountain of Zion, from which they will never part in spirit even when they themselves are far

there they will rest in a good place and graze on fat pasture land toward the mountains of Israel.

**15.** I shall tend My flock, and I will cause them to rest, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**16.** I will seek that which is lost, bring back that which has gone astray; I will bind up that which is broken and restore strength to the sick, but I will destroy the fat and the obstinate—I will graze them with justice.

**17.** But you are My flock! Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I judge between sheep and sheep, rams and he-goats.

**18.** Is it too little for you that

שם תרבעננה בגינה טוב ומרעה  
שכון תריעננה אל-הרי ישראל  
ואני ארעעה צאניו ואני ארביצים  
נאם ארני יהוה:

**16.** את-האברת אבקש ואת-  
הנרתת אשיב ולנשברת אהבש  
ואת-החוליה אחוך ואת-השמנת  
ואת-התזקה אשפיך ארענה  
במושפט:

ו- ואתנה צאניו כה אמר ארני  
יהוה הנני שפט ביז'שה לשזה  
לאילים ולעתירים:

**18.** המקעת מכם המרעעה הטוב

away. Strengthened by the new vitality gained upon the high place of Zion, they will return to the "mountains of Israel."

The thoughts developed above are reflected also in Jeremiah 34, 4-5, 11-13 and 22-24; see our commentary, *ibid.*

*Verses 15 and 16* describe the loving care which God bestows upon each and every member of His flock; *ובקורתם* (Verse 11).

אָהֶן חַלְלָה אֲזֹקָה: cf. Verse 4: God restores the sick not only to health but also to their former vigor (see *Malbim*).

אָהֶן הַשְׁמָנוֹ וּנוּ: But he who thinks he does not need God's guidance because he is strong enough to make his own choices (see Verses 18 ff.) will feel the blows of God's own staff which He will use to destroy the rebels, if need be, in order to save the rest from destruction.

*Verse 17.* They must not forget for even one moment that they are part of God's own flock. This means that they must accept God at all times as their One sole Guide and Judge.

*Verses 18 ff.* Therefore God will not tolerate brutality and egotism on the

you can graze in the good pasture  
and now you trample the rest of  
your pasture with your feet; that  
you drink the clear water and then  
stir up with your feet that which is  
left of it?

19. And they who are after all  
(also) My flock—should they feed  
on that which your feet have tramped  
and drink what your feet have  
stirred up?

20. Therefore, thus has my Lord  
spoken, God, Who reveals His  
loving kindness in justice: Behold,  
I am here, and I will judge between  
the fat sheep and the lean sheep.

21. Because you pushed with  
[your] flank and [your] shoulder  
and thrust against all the weak  
with your horns until you had  
driven them out:

22. And so I will be the helper to  
My flock and they will no longer  
be a prey; I will judge between  
sheep and sheep.

23. I will set over them one  
shepherd who will tend to them:

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part of the strong at the expense of the weak. God's own pasture, His own wellspring of life, will give nourishment and refreshment to all. Where God is recognized as the Supreme Judge, all those that consider themselves His flock will be united by the bond of brotherly love.

**שָׁעַם סְמִיךְתָּה** (see Chapter 32, Verse 13), "to sink," or "to settle;" i.e., clear water, wellsprings from which the mud has settled at the bottom. **רַפֵּשׁ בָּרָא**, related to **בָּרָא**, "stout," "strong" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 1,1); **דָּרַךְ**, "to push" or "thrust."

*Verses 22–23.* God Himself, Ezekiel declares, will be the Supreme Judge in the Jewish state of the future. God's rule will put an end to the evils that brought about the disruption and breakup of the ancient Jewish kingdom (see Chapter 37, Verses 15 ff.). Then, too, there will arise a shepherd who will

תְּרֻעָה גַּתְתָּר מֶרְעֵיכֶם  
תְּרַמְסֹעַ בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם וּמְשֻׁקָּעִים  
תְּשַׁחֲתוּ וְאַתְּ הַנּוֹתָרִים בְּרַגְלֵיכֶם  
תְּרִפְשָׁוֹן:

19. וְצִאַנְיָן מְרַכֵּס רַגְלֵיכֶם תְּרַעִינָה  
וּמְרַפֵּשׁ רַגְלֵיכֶם תְּשַׁתִּינָה: ס

20. לְכָן כִּי אָמַר אֶלְנִי יְהוָה  
אֲלֵיכֶם הַנְّגִירִאָנִי וְשִׁפְטָתִי בֵּין  
שָׂה בְּרָה וּבֵין שָׂה דָּרוֹה:

21. יוֹעֵן בָּצֶר וּבְכַתְּפָע תְּהִרְפֹּו  
וּבְקָרְנֵיכֶם תְּגַנְּחוּ בְּלִתְגְּחָלוֹת  
עַד אֲשֶׁר הַפִּיצּוֹתָם אֶתְנָה אַל-  
הַחֲזֹואה:

22. וְהַוּשְׁעָתִי לְצִאַנְיָן וְלְאַתְּהִינָה  
עֹור לְכָנו וְשִׁפְטָתִי בֵּין שָׂה לְשָׂה:

23. וְהַקְמָתִי עַלְيָהָם רַעֲהָ אֶחָר

My servant David. He will tend to them, he will be a shepherd to them.

וְרֹעֶה אֲתֶה אֶת עַבְדֵי דָּיוֹיד  
הַוְּרֹעֶה אֱתָם וְהַוְּרֹעֶה לְךָ  
לְרֹעֶה:

**24.** I, הִ, will be God to them, and My servant David prince in their midst—I, הִ, have spoken.

וְאַנְיִ וְהַזָּה אֱהֹוֹה לְהֶם לְאֱלֹהִים  
וְעַבְדֵי דָּרוֹר נְשִׂיא בְּתוֹכָם אַנְיִ וְהַזָּה  
רְבָרְתִּי:

**25.** Then I will conclude for them a covenant of peace: I will cause wild beasts to vanish from the land and they will dwell (even) in the wilderness without care and sleep in the forests.

וְכָרְתִּי לְהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם  
וְהַשְּׁפְּתִּי חִיה־רֹעֶה מִזְמָרָץ  
וַיֵּשְׁבּוּ בְּמִרְכָּבָר לְבָטָח וַיַּשְׁגַּן  
בְּיִשְׁעָרִים:

בְּשָׁעָרִים קָרִי.

tend the flock for God, as a servant of the invisible Divine Shepherd. The true scion of King David will also be the true shepherd of his people. Note the change in gender from masculine to feminine: וְהַקְמֵתִי עָלָיהם (masculine); once they accept God as their Shepherd, even the weak will no longer feel helpless וְוַתֵּה אָתָה (feminine), for the strong, too, will readily submit to the guidance of the One Shepherd, הַוְּרֹעֶה אֱתָם because they will know where the true source of their strength lies, הַוְּרֹעֶה יִהְיֶה לְךָ and so they will unanimously render homage to the shepherd whom God will send to guide them.

*Verse 24.* From that day on, they will recognize הִ. Whose infinite mercy they will have experienced as אֱלֹקִים, their Judge and Lawgiver for all time. The ruler from the Davidian dynasty who considers himself merely as a servant of God will be only נְשִׂיא בְּתוֹכָם "a prince in their midst." He will arise from the midst of the people; like all of them, he, too, will obey the Law of God. He will perceive his position that "lifted him up" (וְשִׂיא) from out of the midst of his people as analogous merely to the function of the clouds in the heavens, elevated to his lofty position and saturated with the strength and marrow of his nation only so that these energies may eventually be turned back to that nation, making it fruitful and strong (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 17,20).

*Verse 25.* Then there will be seen the fulfillment of all the promises of blessings and prosperity which the Word of God (Leviticus 26,3) made dependent on the painstaking fulfillment of God's Law and which will transform the soil of the Holy Land into a paradise. The moment has then come at which the promise וְנוֹתֵת שָׁלוּם בָּאָרֶץ (Leviticus 26,6) will be fulfilled. The words שְׁכַנְתֶּם לְנֶטֶח בָּאָרֶץ explain the promise in connection with כְּפָרְבָר וּנוֹתֵן טָרֵיד (ibid., Verses 5–6): You will lie down and nothing will disturb your rest.

26. And I will make them and the surroundings of My hill a blessing; I shall cause the rain to fall in its season, showers of blessing they will be.

27. The tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its produce, and they will dwell without care on their soil; but they will recognize that I am He, as I break the bars of their yoke and rescue them from the hand of those that enslave them.

28. They will no longer be the prey for the nations, and the beasts

וְגַתְתִּי אֹתָם וְסֶבֶכֶת גְּבֻעָתִי  
בְּרָכָה וְהַוְרָךְתִּי הַנְּשָׁמֶן בְּעֵתָנוֹ  
גַּשְׁמֵי בְּרָכָה יְהִוָּה

וְגַתְתִּי עַז הַשְׁרָה אֶת־פְּרוּ  
וְהַאֲרָצָה תַּפְעֵן יְכִינָה וְהִוָּעָלָה  
אַרְכּוֹתָם לְבָטֵח נְוַרְעָוָקִיר־אָנָּנוּ וְהַזָּהָה  
בְּשַׁבְּרִי אֶת־מְטוּתָה עַלְמָה וְהַצְּלָתִים  
מִירָן הַעֲבָרִים בָּהֶם:

וְלֹא־יְהִוָּה עֹד בָּז לְגַזְוִים וְתִינְגָּזָה

*Verse 26.* נָתַן, and נָתַתִּי with a double accent: to reveal a new aspect in a person or an object. They will no longer consider their rainfall simply as the result of natural conditions but as a blessing, granted them by reason of their way of life, and thus they will become a blessing to many others. And because they will view all of their land only as the "surroundings of My Will," and themselves only as a flock rallying around the mountain of God (בְּגַתְתִּי רְשָׁלִימִים, Isaiah 10,32; cf. I Samuel 10,5) their rains, too, will come to them in due season. The rains will come because the people will be worthy of them; that is why the rainfall will be truly true (cf. Psalms 133,3: כִּי שָׁמֶן זָהָר אֵת הַבָּרָכָה; זָהָר אֵת הַבָּרָכָה; Zion is the source of all blessings. Every dewdrop sent to make the Holy Land fertile will fall upon the summit of Zion). The rains which will then fall will be—as stated in Leviticus 26,4—truly your rains (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

*Verse 27.* וְתוּן וְנוֹ (Leviticus 26,4–6). There was a time when the people feared so greatly for their physical survival that they fell victim to a fatal error: they worshipped the "gods of nature." But those days will be gone forever. They will have found the One Who will lift these cares from them and will free them forever from their self-imposed bondage to nature. He alone also has the power to liberate them from the yoke of alien nations (Verse 28). Independent of all natural and historical impediments, the people of Israel will then go their own way as the servants of God.

*Verse 28.* For far too long this flock has been easy prey for the rapacious nations that pounced upon the defenseless exiles like wild beasts. Now, at long

of the land will not feed on them; they will dwell without care and nothing will disturb their rest.

**29.** I will raise up for them a plantation that will bring (them) renown and they will no longer be destroyed by hunger in the land and will no longer have to bear the shame of the nations.

**30.** And they will recognize that I, הָנֶם, their God, am with them and that they, the house of Israel (are) My people, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

הָאָרֶץ לֹא תִּאכְלָם וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לְבָטָח  
וְאַיִן מִתְּרוּד:

29. וְהַקְמָתִי לָהֶם מִשְׁעָלָם לְאָזְרָם  
יְהִוָּה עַד אֲסֶפֶת רָעָב בָּאָרֶץ וְלֹא  
יִשְׂאוּ עוֹד כְּלָמָת הַגּוֹיִם:

30. וַיַּרְאוּ כִּי אָנִי יְהֹוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם  
אַתֶּם וְהַמָּה עַמְּךָ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל נָאָם  
אָרְצֵי יְהֹוָה:

last, they have their true Shepherd, before Whose commanding glance all the "beasts of the field" will flee in fear.

*Verse 29.* Not even one of God's promises will remain unfulfilled. Note, however, that God is not only the Shepherd of His people but also the One Who plants His people firmly in their soil. The allegory in Chapter 17, Verses 22 ff. will now become reality. This planting upon the soil of God, on which God, in fact, has been at work without cease, will not only bring renown (שם) to Israel but also give glory to the Name of God among mankind because it has been His own work alone יְהֹוָה דִּי להַתְּפָאָר (Isaiah 60,21). The rich wellsprings that nourish this planting will never run dry. Then Israel need no longer fear hunger. The times during which Israel suffered from starvation were also the most ignominious in its history. But then, do the nations, have the right to fault the Jewish people on that account? After all, were not the nations themselves the cause of Israel's ignominy? (see Chapter 36).

*Verse 30.* The people of Israel have also come to understand, at long last, that if they wish to enjoy His blessed nearness, they must first recognize God as their own God, to Whose will they must unconditionally subordinate every aspect of their lives. אָם בְּחֻקָּתֵי חַלְכוּ וּנוּר (Leviticus ibid., Verse 12)

הַחֲלָכָתִי בְּתוּכְכֶם וְהַיְחִי לְכֶם כִּי אַנְיִה אֱלֹהִים אֶתְם (Leviticus ibid., Verse 12) If they would be worthy of the name they must first become God's own nation, for only then will they have fulfilled the terms under which their forefather bequeathed their heritage to them (see Chapter 3, Verse 1).

31. But you, as My flock,  
flock of My pasture—be men!  
I (should be) your God!, is the  
pronouncement of my Lord, God,  
Who reveals His loving kindness  
in justice.

וְאַתֶּן צָאֵנוּ צָאן פָּרָעוּתִי אֶלָּם  
אַתֶּם אֲנִי אֱלֹהֶיכֶם נָאֵם אֲדֹנִי  
יְהוָה: פ

**Chap. 35.** 1. Then the Word of God came to me:

לְהָ. וַיֹּאמֶר רְבָרְדִּילֹה אֶלְיוֹן לְאַמְּרוֹ:

**Verse 31.** תְּהִלָּה: The closing message of this splendid chapter is addressed to those amongst the nation who, in their present state, are still far from deserving the fulfillment of the promises set forth in this chapter: You must know that when God requires you to submit unconditionally to His guidance, this means nothing more and nothing less than that you must return to your true, original human destiny. Only if you are אֲנִי can you become אדם. But this can come to pass only if you will indeed recognize God as your God, if you will be ready to serve Him with all your lives and to perceive every aspect of your lives only in terms of His will.

The following interpretation was taught me by my father, אַפְּמִיר הַגְּנָזִים: If you wish ever to rise from weakness to strength, you must learn to recognize God as the Shepherd of your lives. Without God you are condemned to a perpetual state of helplessness, אַתָּה (feminine gender). Only if you are אָדָם (masculine gender), will you become invincible. The promise סֵדֶת זְהֻבָּה וְרַעֲנָן (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 15,5) was inscribed in the book of your life from the very beginning. You are not like the other nations that see their survival in terms of natural conditions. You are like "the stars in the heavens" in that you will remain forever "direct products of God's creation, exactly as all else that was formed by God at the time of Creation." אדם אֲמָם like Adam, the first man to be created, Israel will remain forever a direct product of God's act of creation קָדוּשָׁת אֱלֹהִים קָדוּשָׁת קָדוּשָׁת קָדוּשָׁת. In this sense, it is only the people of Israel that truly deserve the title of "Adam." Of course, this does not mean that we should regard the non-Jewish nations as something less than human, as is made abundantly clear by the words of our Sages; e.g., אדם כי יקריב, נכרים נוראים ונורמות כישראל (חולין יג:) סְבִיבָן אֲסִילָוּ. נְכָרִי וּוֹעֲשָׂה את התורה וכיר ח"ל אשר יעשה אותן חותם וזה ג.

**Chapter 35.** Chapter 34 set forth the conditions under which the "mountains of Israel" will be restored to their proud beauty as of old (see Verses 13–14 ff.).

2. Son of mankind, turn your face toward Mount Seir and pronounce your prophetic word over it.

3. And say to it: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I turn to you, Mount Seir; I will incline My hand over you and give you to desolation and horror.

4. Your cities I will turn into ruins; you, yourself, will become a desolation, and thus will you recognize that I am God.

5. Because you maintained perpetual hatred and caused [the blood of] the sons of Israel to flow by the sword at the time of their disaster, the time of their ultimate guilt;

בָּרוּךְ אֶתְנוּ שִׁים פָּנֵיךְ עַל־הַר  
שְׂעִיר וְהַגְּבֵא עָלָיו:

וְאָמַרְתָּ לֹא כִּי אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי וְהַהֲ  
הַנְּנִי אֶלְךָ הַר־שְׂעִיר וְגַטְתִּי יְהִי  
עַלְיךָ וְנִתְחַזֵּק שְׁמַקְתָּה וּמִשְׁפָּתָה:

עַד־יְמִינְךָ אֶת־הַר־זְבֻחַת־אֱלֹהִים  
שְׁמַקְתָּה תְּהִיא וּוּרְעַת־כִּי־אֲנִי יוֹלֵה:

וְיָעַן הַיּוֹת לְכָא אִיבַּת עֲוֹלָם  
וְתַגְנֵר אֶת־בְּנֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל־יְהוּדָה  
חַרְכָּב בְּעֵת אִירָם בְּעֵת עָזָן קָצָן:

The description culminates in a portrayal of the exalted position ultimately to be occupied by Mount Zion in the midst of these mountains. But the yearning for the fulfillment of this promise is not confined to the people of Israel. It is the goal toward which all of world history is directed. For the fateful issue of world history from time immemorial has been: which of the two mountains will flourish—the “mountain of Zion” or the “mountain of Esau”? This question will be answered in the present chapter and in Chapter 36. We already find in the prophecy of Obadiah (Verse 21), in essence, also the message contained in these two chapters of Ezekiel: “As harbingers of redemption will they come up on Mount Zion to judge the Mount of Esau, and the kingdom shall be God’s.”

*Verse 2.* הַר שְׂעִיר should be understood against the background of world history as portrayed in Chapter 25, Verses 12–14 (see our commentary, *ibid.*)

*Verse 3 ff.* The mountain of Seir must become a wilderness, for only then can the prophecy כי אני ה' וידעת כי אני ה' come true (cf. Chapter 25, Verse 14 and our commentary, *ibid.*)

*Verse 5.* עָזָן: Esau’s hatred is עָזָן, the historic confrontation between two opposing worlds. נָגַר is a *hiph’il* form: “to cause [something] to flow away.” For עָזָן, see our commentary on Chapter 21, Verse 30.

6. Therefore, as I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I will turn you into blood, blood will pursue you; indeed, you have hated blood and blood will pursue you.

7. I will give Mount Seir to desolation, [indeed] to desolation, and I destroy from it every one who passes by.

8. I will fill its mountains with its slain: your hills, your valleys and all your deep wells—the slain by the sword fall amongst them.

9. I will abandon you to eternal desolation; your cities will never be inhabited again, and thus will you recognize that I am God.

ו. **לְכָן חִרְאָנִי נָאֵם אַרְעֵנִי יְהוָה  
כִּי־לְכָם אֲשֶׁר־בָּם וְרַבָּפָךְ אַמְּסָה:  
לֹא כָּם שְׁנָאתְךָ וְלֹם וְרַבָּפָךְ:**

ז. **וְגַתְתִּי אֶת־הַר שְׁעִיר לְשִׁמְמָה  
וְשִׁמְמָה וְהַכְּרִתִּי טְפָנוּ עַבְרֵנִים וְשָׁבָבָה:**

ו. **וּמְלָאָתִי אֶת־הַרְרוֹיו חַלְלוֹ  
גְּבֻעוֹתָיךְ וְנוֹאוֹתָיךְ וּכְלַ-אֲפִיקָּיךְ  
חַלְלִי-חַרְבָּךְ יַפְלוּ בָּהֶם:**

ז. **שִׁמְמָות עֲלֹם אַתְּנֵךְ וְעַרְיוֹךְ לֹא  
תִּישְׁבֹּנָה וְיַרְעַתָּם כִּי־אָנִי יוֹהָה:**

השובנה קרי.

**Verse 6.** This is a note of cruel irony: Esau has lived from blood, and now God will turn Esau himself into blood. Strangely ironical though it may sound, Esau always hated the very thought of blood. His own blood was precious to him and he trembled at the thought that someday his own turn might come, his blood might be shed. Now the blood of those slain by his hand will pursue him without cease until he has expiated his crimes. **חוּתוֹ גָּבוֹרָךְ יִתְּמַן לְפָעַן יִכְּרֹת**: Esau has shed too much blood, thus is the judgment of Obadiah (Verse 9).

As our Sages put it so profoundly **דָם שְׁנָאת**: Esau thirsted for blood, but at the same time he hated blood. The blood he hated was, **בֵית בְּכוֹרָה**, the blood he should have offered up to his God because, as the first-born, he should have served as a priest, making the prescribed offerings; but instead, he despised his birthright and threw it away. He also hated **דָם מִילָה**, the blood of *milah*, that should have inspired him to devote his life to pure and godly endeavors (cf. Rashi).

**Verse 7.** **שִׁמְמָה וְשִׁמְמָה**: This is the only passage in Scripture where **שִׁמְמָה** occurs. Perhaps this repetition is meant to stress the threat of desolation which God has proclaimed again and again concerning the mountain of Esau. It would then correspond to the prophecy in Malachi 1:4: **הַמֶּה יִבְנֶנֶה זָרָבָה אֶחָרוֹת**.

**Verses 8-9.** **הַרְיוֹן**: Alongside Mount Seir there are other powers that look

**10.** Because you dared to say: These two nations and these two lands will be *mine*, and we will take possession of them—and yet there was there!

וְיַעֲן אָמָר אֶת־שְׁנִי הַגּוֹם  
וְאֶת־שְׁתִי הָאֶרֶצִות לִי תְהִלֵּנָה  
וַיַּרְשְׁנֹה וַיַּהַנֵּה שֵׁם דָּיוֹה:  
וְהַיְיָה כִּי־בְּשָׂרֶב וְבְּמִלְחָמָה

**11.** Therefore, as I live, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I will deal with you in accordance with your fury and your zeal with which you acted against them in your hatred—and I shall gain recognition in their midst when I will judge you.

וְלֹכֶן חִידָּשִׁי נָאָם אֶרְנִי יְהֹוָה  
וְשְׁתִי בְּאָפָר וּבְקָנָאתְךָ אֲשֶׁר  
עֲשִׂיתָ מְשֻׁנָּאָתִיךָ בָּם וּנוֹרָעָתִי  
בָּם כִּאֲשֶׁר אָשְׁפְּטָה:

**12.** And you (too) will recognize that I am God—I have heard all your blasphemies that you poured out over the mountains of Israel; they have become desolate; they are given to us as food.

וְוַדְעָתָ קָרְאָנִי וְהַזָּה שְׁמַעְתִּי  
אֶת־כָּל־גָּנוֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר אָמְרָתָ  
שְׁלֹהָרוּ וִשְׁרָאֵל לְאָמֵר אֲשֶׁר  
לְנוּ נָתַנְנוּ לְאַכְלָה:

**13.** And when you triumphed

וְתַגְנִילוּ עַל בְּפִיכֶם  
שְׁסָמוּ קָרִי.

to Esau as their ideal, hence the plural form **חִישְׁבָּנָה**; **וַיַּדְעָתָם** is a combination of **שָׁבָר** and **שָׁבָר**.

**Verse 10.** **שְׁנִי הַגּוֹם**: These are the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. Did Esau really think he could ever assume the place of Judah and Israel? If so had exiled His own people from His sacred soil because they had desecrated it, could Esau dare even think of setting foot upon it? Cf. our commentary on Chapter 26, Verse 2. **שְׁנִי הַגּוֹם** recalls the passage **שְׁנִי גּוֹתָם נְכַסְתָּם** in Genesis 25,23: Esau boasted that he would rule over both these worlds.

**Verse 11.** **מְשֻׁתָּחַץ בָּם**: In the final analysis Esau's hatred of Judah and Israel was really a hatred of God Whose supremacy Esau rejected.

When God will judge Esau, Judah and Israel will recognize His supremacy once more. **וְנִדְעָא בָּם**: there is still a God Who guides the history of mankind.

**Verses 12–13.** Even Esau will eventually have to change his attitude. He will be overcome with shame and remorse when he will remember how he once thought he had defeated God by turning the "mountain of Israel" into rubble. **שְׁמַטָּה** (**שְׁמַטָּה**): He had centered his attention upon the one mount among Israel's mountains which he was most eager to destroy: he thought he had

over Me and attacked Me with your forceful words—I heard it!

**14.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, when some day the whole earth is to rejoice, I will have to decree desolation upon you.

**15.** Even as you rejoiced regarding the inheritance of the house of Israel when it lay desolate, so will I do to you: you will become a desolation, Mount Seir and Edom in its entirety—and thus they will recognize that I am God.

**Chap. 36. 1.** And you, son

וְהַעֲתָרָתֶם עַלְיָהָרִיכֶם אֲנֵי  
שְׁמֻעָתֵיכֶם

אֵ. בְּהָאָפָר אֲרֹנוֹ יְהוָה בְּשָׂמֶן  
כָּל־הָאָרֶץ שְׁמַפְתָּה אֱשָׁשָׁה־לָךְ:

15. בְּשָׂמֶחֶת לְגַחְלָת בֵּית־  
וּשְׁرָאֵל עַל אֲשֶׁר־שְׁמַפְתָּה כֹּן  
אֱשָׁשָׁה־לָךְ שְׁמַפְתָּה תְּהִיה נָרָ  
שְׁעִיר וְכָל־אָרוּם גָּלָה וְגַעֲשָׂו פִּיר  
אֲנֵי יְהוָה פָּ

לו וְוְאַתָּה בְּנוֹאָרֶם הַבָּא אֶל־

succeeded in destroying Mount Zion. And therefore God perceived in Esau's shouts of triumph the challenge that Esau was hurling at him.

וַיְכַלּוּ וְאַתָּה נָטוּ הַשְׁטוֹ: "They laid waste His habitation and thought they had destroyed God" (Jeremiah 10,25). עַטְרָה, העתרות, related to עַתְרָה; i.e., to penetrate [a land or an object] by force; to prevail [upon a person]; see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 8,4.

*Verse 14.* Esau rejoiced at the destruction he had wrought. But God did not create His world to become a wasteland; He formed it so that it should be inhabited (Isaiah 45,18). The earth was meant to be filled with joy. "When God assumes His reign, the earth will rejoice" (see Rashi). But before this can happen, Esau himself must first be destroyed.

*Verse 15.* Esau rejoiced over the downfall of the land of Israel, thinking that God had now lost His last remaining "inheritance" on earth. But Esau was mistaken. ארץ ישראל still remained, waiting for the day when a reborn "House of Israel," once more aware of its God-ordained mission, will return to its soil in order to consecrate it to God, to offer it up to Him as הר עמלון, a holy mountain, belonging to Him (Exodus 15,17). And that is why the "mountain of Esau," and indeed all the powers which, in the spirit of Edom, had rejected the supremacy of God, must be laid waste, יִדְרֹשׁוּ כִּי אֲנֵי הָ

**Chapter 36. Verse 1.** The "mountains of Israel" will hear the Divine

of mankind, speak your prophetic word to the mountains of Israel, and say: Mountains of Israel, hearken to the Word of God.

2. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because the enemy has said 'Aha!' over you and 'eternal heights'—it has become a possession to us!

3. Therefore, speak your prophetic word and say: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because, and only because they have ravaged you and panted

הָרִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֹמֶרֶת הָרִי  
וַיִּשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמַעַ רְכִירְיוֹתָה:

בָּה אָמַר אֱלֹנִי וְהָרָה נָעַן אָמַר  
הָאוֹבֵב עֲלֵיכֶם הָאָחָז בְּמֹות עָוֹלָם  
לְמוֹרֶשֶׁה דִּוְתָה לְגַנְגָה:

לְכָן הַגְּבָא וְאֹמֶרֶת כָּה אָמַר  
אֱלֹנִי וְהָרָה יָעַן בְּלֹעַן שְׁמֹת וְשָׁאָפָּה  
אַתֶּכָם מִסְכִּיב לְהַוְתָכֶם כּוֹרְשָׁה

assurance, the promise of a new future and a renewed flowering. Note the Prophet's stress on the Divine origin particularly of the words with which he conveys this assurance (Verses 2–7). For the task at hand was not merely to strengthen the faith of the Jewish people in exile under the immediate, disheartening impact of the catastrophe that had just befallen them. The hour demanded that this faith should be implanted firmly in Jewish consciousness for all times as an irrefutable truth so fundamental that neither the scorn of the nations nor the blows of fate, no matter how harsh, would affect it in the least. That is why the Prophet introduces his message, given in the name of God, with the words כֵּה אָמַר אֱלֹנִי אֶלְקִים six times in this one chapter and then, in Verse 7, in an anthropomorphic metaphor, has God raise His hand in a solemn vow: anyone who will then still harbor the slightest doubt about the future of "the mountain of Israel" will thereby place himself in contempt of the Word of God.

*Verse 2.* יָעַן בְּלֹעַם: בְּלֹעַם עָולָם: in taking possession of אֶרְץ יִשְׂרָאֵל, Israel, as God's own nation, was to "climb the high places of the earth" (Deuteronomy 32,13: יְרַכְּבָו עַל בָּמֹת אֶרְץ). Note the singular verb הַיְהָ with the plural case: the implication is that when the foe takes possession of Israel's "high places," he regards them as wretched and poor.

*Verse 3.* יָעַן בְּלֹעַם is a *pi'el* infinitive. שָׁאָפָה is "greedily to reach for an object" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 56,2). Even as the enemy nations greedily pounce upon Israel, the Prophet already pictures them as שָׁאָרִית הַנְּרָמִים (Verse 36). As such, they have no right to gloat over their defeat of Israel. Israel will become the inheritance of הנְּרִים, but only

greedily after you on every side, as if you had been delivered up as an inheritance for the "rest of the nations"—so that you are raised to the lips of the tongue and (have become) the talk of the people.

4. Therefore, mountains of Israel, hear the Word of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Thus has my Lord spoken. God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, to the mountains and the hills, to the deep wells and the valleys, to the desolate ruins and the forsaken cities that have become a prey and derision to the "rest of the nations" all around.

5. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Truly in the fire of the assertion of My rights have I proclaimed against the "rest of the nations" and against all of Edom who have given My land to themselves as

לְשָׁאָרִית הַגּוֹנִים וְתַעֲלוּ עַל־שֻׁפֶּת  
לְשָׁוֹן וְרַבְתִּיעָם:

ו. לְבָנֵן קָרְבֵּן וּשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמְעוּ דְּבָרֵי  
אָלָנוּ יְהוָה בְּהַאֲפָרֵךְ אֲרָנוּ  
יְהוָה לְהָרִים וְלְגָבְעֹות לְאָפִיקִים  
וְלְפָאֹות וְלְחָרְבֹּות הַשְּׁמְסֹות  
וְלְעָרִים הַגְּזֻבּוֹת אֲשֶׁר קָנָו לְבָנָו  
וְלִלְעָנָן לְשָׁאָרִית הַגּוֹנִים אֲשֶׁר  
מִפְּקָדֵיכְם:

ז. לְבָנֵן בְּהַאֲפָרֵךְ אֲרָנוּ יְהוָה  
אִסְלָא בָּאָשׁ קְנָאָתִי דְּבָרָתִי  
עַל־שָׁאָרִית הַגּוֹנִים וְעַל־אָרוֹן  
כָּלָא אֲשֶׁר נְתַנְּרָאָת־אָרָצִי |

כליה קרי.

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so that they will consider it a shame (Amos 9,12). "you are taken up on the lips of the nations;" you are dismissed with a sneer of the lips (cf. Psalms 22,8), and of those nations that will remember you none will consider itself too lowly to slander (רְבָת עַמָּה) you in a show of "moral indignation."

*Verse 4.* But they, the people of Israel, shall never cease to regard themselves as "mountains" to which He has addressed His timeless message. Ridicule from the "remnant of the nations" should not trouble them.

*Verse 5.* **בְּשָׁם נָמָת**, see our commentary on Chapter 25, Verse 6. The nations hurled themselves upon the people and the land of Israel, pretending that they were only carrying out God's intentions. Had not God Himself cursed His people? Had He Himself not disowned His land, allowing it to become the booty of the nations of the world? (**טְבַשָּׁה לְבָנָן**). But, in truth, this land will always remain **אָרָצִי**, God's own land. All the earlier messages of the Prophets

an inheritance with the joy of all their heart, with contempt for the soul, in order to (justify their claim that My people) had been "cast out as prey."

6. Therefore, speak your prophetic word over the soil of Israel and say to the mountains, the hills, the deep wells and the valleys: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, in the assertion of My rights and in My flaming anger have I spoken: Because you have borne the shame of the nations;

7. Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I will lift up My hand; surely the nations that surround you, they shall bear their shame!

8. But you, mountains of Israel,

לְהָם לִמְוֹרֶשֶׁה בְּשִׂמְתַת כָּלִילָבָד  
בְּשִׂאֵת נֶפֶשׁ לְמַעַן מְגֻשָּׁה לְבָבוֹ:

6. לְכָן הַגָּבָא עַל-אָרֶקֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל  
וְאָמְרָתָה לְהָרִים וְלְגָבְעֹתָה לְאֲפִיקִים  
וּלְפָאוֹתָה כִּיה-אָמָר | אֲלֹנִי גְּדוֹהָ  
הַגְּנִינִי בְּקָנָאָתִי וּבְחַמְתִּי רְבָרָתִי  
יַעַן כְּלָפָתָה גְּנוּם גְּשָׁאָתָם:

7. לְכָן פֶּה אָמַר אֲלֹנִי גְּדוֹהָ אָנִי  
גְּשָׁאָתִי אַתִּירִי אַסְדָּא הַגּוֹנוֹם  
אֲשֶׁר לְכֶם מִפְּבִיבָה גְּמָה כְּלָפָתָם  
יִשְׂאָו:

8. וְאַתֶּם רַבִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל עַנְפָקָם

predicting the ultimate destruction of these nations have made it clear that God will never cease to assert His claim to the land of Israel. God will insist upon His rights; the people and the land of Israel will remain God's own possession forever. Instead of *אָדָם כָּלָה* (cf. Psalms 127,2).

*Verse 6.* The land will never lose its special character as the land of Israel . . . : The nations will never have a right to insult you because of your "ruins and your abandoned cities." Had you been judged by the yardstick of their morality, you would never have been considered deserving of the catastrophe that has now befallen you. The foregoing is implied in this verse by the absence of the words *חרבות השטוחות וערים הנעבות* used in Verse 4.

*Verse 7.* Instead of feeling remorse over their own shortcomings, the nations have lorded it over you. Therefore the humiliation they sought to inflict upon you will come down with devastating force upon their own heads.

*Verse 8.* *ונפקם*, see our commentary on Chapter 17, Verse 23. Let "the mountains of Israel" hold themselves in readiness for the time when they will

give your branches and ripen your fruit for My people Israel—for they will bring their homecoming nearer.

9. For behold, I am turning to you, I will bestow (My care) upon you; you will be tilled (again) and sown.

10. And I will multiply men upon you, the whole house of Israel in its entirety, and the cities will be inhabited and the ruins rebuilt.

11. And I will multiply upon you man and beast—they will multiply and become fruitful, and I will cause you to be inhabited as in your time past, and I will do more good (for you) than in former times—and you will recognize that I am.

12. And (then) I will cause men

תַּתְנִוְתֶּן וְפָרֹכֶם תְּשָׂאוּ לְעַמִּי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי קָרְבָּו לְבָוָא:

ט. כִּי הַנּוּ אֲלֵיכֶם וְפָנִיתִי אֲלֵיכֶם  
וְנִعְכְּרַתֶּם וְנוֹרַעֲתֶם:

י. וְהַרְבֵּיתִי עַלְיכֶם אָרֶם כָּל-  
בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל גָּלָה וְנוֹשָׁבֵד הָעָרִים  
וְהַחֲרַבּוֹת תִּבְגִּינָה:

ו. וְהַרְבֵּיתִי עַלְיכֶם אָרֶם  
וּבְכָמָה וּרְבָיו וּפָרוֹ וְהַוְשָׁבָתִי  
אֲתֶכֶם בְּקָרְמָוֹתֶיכֶם וְהַטְּלָתִי  
סְרָאשָׁתֶיכֶם וְיַרְעָתֶם כִּירָאָנִי  
יְהֹוָה:

יא. וְהַולְכָתִי עַלְיכֶם אָרֶם אַתָּה

be clothed once more in their lush paradisiac vegetation as of old. The day will come when they will no longer have to withhold their original abundance from the people of Israel, and the curse that had been uttered against ארץ ישראל will be lifted. All this will come to pass when Israel has been purified by the sufferings of exile. When the Holy Land will be deemed worthy of God's blessing once more (and the coming of that day rests only with Israel), the Prophet declares, the time will also have come for the people of Israel to set out on their journey home. כי קָרְבָּו לְבָוָא: (the subject of קָרְבָּו, a *pi'el* form, is הארץ) Nature itself, in full flower as of old, calls the people of Israel back to their land.

The Sages ask: מה רואו לוטר קבוץ גליות אחר מבחן השנים ונחיב אותן גראם (מנילה ז): Why does the *barca* for the ingathering of the exiles come immediately after the *barca* for a blessed year? In answer they cite the present verse. כי קָרְבָּו לְבָוָא. When the Holy Land will be worthy of God's blessing again, all of us will be deemed worthy of returning to the Land.

Verses 9–12. The "mountains of Israel" will be tilled and cultivated again. God Himself is at work rebuilding the Jewish Homeland, devoting all His care and attention to this objective. (Verse 10): Israel will be won

to come upon you. My people Israel, and they will take possession of you and you will become their inheritance and you will no longer bereave them of their children.

עמִי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיַּרְשֹׁוק וְהִיעֵית לְהַם  
לְנַחֲלָה וְלְאִתּוֹסֶף עֹזֶר לְשִׁפְלָם:

back increasingly for its sublime purpose: to realize the ideal of pure humanity on earth (see Chapter 34, Verse 31: **(אָחָן צָאַנִּי־אָדָם אָתָם)**). Not one member of this people, no matter how alienated he may have become from God (we need only recall the Ten Lost Tribes), will be missing. **כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּלֶה**. For the present, God is working with them (**Verse 11**): **אָרֶם וּבְהִמְתָּה** (**Jeremiah 31,26**; see our commentary, *ibid.*). The term **אָרֶם וּבְהִמְתָּה** implies a noble seed that still includes base admixtures, but God is continually at work to overcome these flaws and to refine the ultimate product. **רָבוּ וּפָרוּ**: here, as in **Jeremiah 3,16** (see our commentary, *ibid.*), the expression employed is not in the usual order **פָּרוּ וּרָבוּ** but in the reverse. **פָּרָה** denotes fecundity, an abundance of offspring. **רָבָה** refers to the moral and spiritual training by which the personalities of children are molded so that they may emulate their parents who desire to see themselves perpetuated through their offspring (see Hirsch Commentary, **Genesis 1,28**). Significantly, the reverse order of **רָבוּ** and **פָּרָה** in the present verse implies that the promise of fecundity is conditional upon the parents' efforts to meet the moral requirements of parenthood. And this means that **ודָע** will assume, more and more, the character of **אָרֶם**, the human seed which, planted by God, places itself completely under His care. **וְהַשְׁבָּתִי**: Once this has come to pass, the "mountains of Israel" will again assume their original character, **הַשְׁבָּתִי** becoming worthier of God's bounty than ever before. For then they will have reached for all time the high standard which, in the past, they had attained only for brief periods. **וְהַלְכָתִי** **עֲלֵיכֶם אָרֶם** (**Verse 12**): as "*Mensch Yisroel*,"\* Israel will happily yield to God's own guidance and be **עַמִּי**. The days when base elements refused Him their allegiance will be gone forever. Once the original conditions that were part of God's plan from the very beginning have been restored, **כָּל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כֹּלֶה**. The "mountains of Israel" (the two separate kingdoms of Judah and Israel) will then reunite to form one single mountain. **וְהַלְכָתִי עַלְכֶם־וְיַשְׁטַק**: This will be the holy mountain upon which the Jewish nation will then be established forever: **טֹעַטָּו בָּהָר נַחֲלָן** (**Exodus 15,17**).

*Verses 12–14.* **אָרֶם יִשְׂרָאֵל** represents a major challenge. The spies that were

\* *Mensch-Yisroel*—“Man-Israelite.” The author refers to the term used recurrently by Rav S. R. Hirsch meaning universal man elevated to a higher plane through the Torah, i.e., the ideal man (cf. *Horeb*, Additional Note A, p. 271). (Ed.)

13. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Because it is said of you that you devour men and bereave your nations of children:

14. Therefore you will devour men no more and no longer bereave your nations of children, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

15. I will no longer allow you to hear the humiliation from the nations, and you will no longer have to bear the shame of the peoples; you will no longer cause your peoples to stumble, is the

13. בָּהּ כֹּה אָמַר אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה יְהֻן אָמְנוּ רְבֵם אֲכַלְתֶּם אֶרְם אָתִי יִמְשְׁפֵלֶת נָגֵךְ הִיּוֹת:

14. לְבָנֶם אֶרְם לְאַתְּ אֲכַלְיָוְד גָּנִיךְ לֹא תִּכְשְׁלִי עָזָר גָּנִים אֶלְעָנִי יְהוָה:

15. וְלֹא-אָשְׁמֵעַ אֶלְעָנִיךְ עוֹד קָלְפָת הַבּוֹיִם וְחַרְפָּת עַמִּים לֹא תִּשְׁאִיר-

את קרי. גָּנִיךְ קרי. גָּנוֹיךְ קרי. תשכלי קרי.

sent to explore the Promised Land were not entirely wrong when they reported that this land **ארץ יושבה היא** (Numbers 13,32): Ultimately, this land will tolerate only inhabitants that will not alienate it from its Divinely-appointed purpose. The soil will reject those who behave in a manner contrary to God's plan. To be sure, Ezekiel notes, those who refuse to understand this will claim **אֲכַלְתֶּם אֶרְם אָתִ**, that the catastrophes which beset the land were unrelated to the moral state of those who dwelled in it. But the future will clearly show **בָּהּ כֹּה אֶרְם לְאֲכַלְיָוְד** that, for a nation that truly abides by its God-ordained human destiny (**אדם**), this land will provide the ground upon which that nation can dwell forever, fashioning its life in accordance with the standards set by God. It must be noted, of course, that this land will accept only one nation, united not only physically but also spiritually as a true people. It will not tolerate that spirit of alienation which once caused Israel to split into **שְׁנֵי נְדָרִים** (Chapter 35, Verse 10). Hence those who say **אַמְתִּים לְכֶם** of the "mountains [plural] of Israel" that **אֲכַלְתֶּם אֶרְם אָתִ** even that "mountain" (see Verse 12) will consume its inhabitants are not telling the truth.

**שְׁלֵל** ("to stumble," "שְׁלֵל") **לֹא-חַשְׁכֵלִי** ("to bereave," "to be bereaved of children") is profoundly significant. There was a time when the land indeed became a **שְׁלֵל**, a stumbling block, for its people because they had exploited its abundance to feed their hunger for power and pleasures instead of utilizing its resources to meet the standards set by God. They were

pronouncement of my Lord, God. Who reveal His loving kindness in justice.

**16.** \* Then the Word of God came to me:

17. Son of mankind, as long as the house of Israel dwelled on its soil, they defiled it by their conduct and their actions—like the uncleanness of a woman who is to be avoided was their way before Me.

18. Then I poured out My anger upon them because of the blood that they poured over the land and which they defiled by their abominations.

19. And I scattered them among the nations when they were dispersed among the lands; in accordance with their conduct and their actions did I judge them.

\* Cf. rendering by Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*.

met then by exile, bereavement: (וַיִּשְׁמֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּכְבַּשׁ שָׂמָן עֲבֵיהֶن כְּשִׁיחַ) Deuteronomy 32:15). But in the future the motto will be Verse 15); the land will no longer be a **מִכְשׁוֹל** and there will be no exile, no bereavement.

**Verses 16 ff.** Israel's future, its moral rebirth and the ingathering of its exiles are linked to Israel's eventual recognition of God's supremacy and to the elevation of all mankind to its original, God-ordained destiny.

**Verse 17.** The nation should have perceived its destiny on the sacred soil as the "House of Israel," a nation united by a bond that linked all its members with God. Instead, it failed to live up to its call of unity; note the plural forms **ישָׁבִים**, **וַיְסַבּוּ**, signifying a lack of unity. And therefore, like the husband who at times must stay away from his wife (Leviticus 18,19), the **שְׁכִינָה** of God departed from the midst of Israel, yearning for the day when the people would regain their **סֻתָּра** and thus be able to reunite with their God.

**Verse 19.** The dispersion of this people among the nations, God declares, is My own work. That which appears to you as the result of a gradual historical process (**וַיַּוּרְאֶנְהָיו בְּאֶרְצָוֹת**) is an act of Divine Providence. **שְׁפָטָתוֹם**: cf. Chapter 12, Verse 15.

עַזְּרָנוּ יְהוָה ס  
עַזְּרָנוּ לְאַתְּכַשְּׁלֵי עוֹד נָאָם

נוּ וַיְהִי רְבִרִיאָתָה אֱלֹי לְאַמְרָה:

לוּ בְּנָאָם בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְשָׁבִים  
עַל-אַרְקָתָם וַיַּטְמֹאֵן אָוֹתָה  
כְּרָכֶם וּכְעַלְיוֹתָם כְּטַמָּאת  
הַגְּרָה הַוְתָּה דְּרָכָם לְפָנֵינוּ:

לוּ וְאַשְׁפֵּךְ חַמְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם עַל-  
הַרְמָם אֲשֶׁר-שָׁפְכוּ עַל-הָאָרֶץ  
וּבְגַלְילֵיכֶם טַמָּאוּה:

לוּ וְאַפְּרִיךְ אֶתְכֶם בְּנוֹתָם וַיַּזְרַח  
בְּאֶרְצָותָם כְּרָכֶם וּכְעַלְיוֹתָם  
שְׁפָטָתוֹם:  
נוֹיֵר קְרִי.

20. As a unit they came to the nations to whom they came, but they defiled My holy Name in that it was said of them: "These are God's people and from His land have they gone forth!"

21. Therefore I had compassion on My holy Name which they defiled when they came among the nations as the house of Israel.

22. Therefore, say to the house of Israel: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: I do not do this for your sake, house of Israel, but for the sake of My holy Name which you defiled among the nations to which you came.

23. But I will sanctify My great Name, desecrated among the na-

20. וַיְכֹוֹא אֶל-הָנוּם אֲשֶׁר-בָּאוּ  
שֶׁם וַיְחַלֵּלוּ אֶת-שֵׁם קָרְשִׁי בְּאָמָר  
לָהֶם עַמּוֹתָנָה אֱלֹה וּמְאַרְצָו  
בְּצָאָן:

21. וְאַחֲמָל עַל-שֵׁם קָרְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר  
חַלְלוּה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנוּם אֲשֶׁר-  
בָּאוּ שְׁפָתָה ס

22. לְכָן אָמָר לְבֵית-יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּה  
אָמָר אֱלֹהֵינוּ וְרוּהָ לֹא לְמַעֲנָכֶם אָנָּנוּ  
עֲשָׂה בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אִם-לְשָׁמֶן  
קָרְשִׁי אֲשֶׁר חַלְלָתֶם בְּנוּם אֲשֶׁר-  
בְּאַתֶּם שֵׁם:

23. וְקָרְשָׁתִי אֶת-שְׁמִי הַגָּדוֹל

*Verse 20.* יִכְוֹא—אֲשֶׁר בָּאוּ: note the singular form. They appeared among the nations as one entity. This turn of phrase alludes to a phenomenon noted throughout the history of the Jewish people in exile. Unworthy or criminal behavior on the part of one Jewish individual is laid at the door of the entire Jewish community. Indeed, the misconduct of one Jew is often attributed to his Judaism. The world has a way of equating the individual with the whole and so, too, any Jew is seen as a representative sample of Judaism and of the entire Jewish people. Remarks such as, "Isn't that just like a Jew!" or "There you have God's Chosen People" are by no means rare in the larger world. As a consequence, un-Jewish\* conduct on the part of any Jewish individual creates a reprehensible **শם**; in this respect, too, "God must suffer along with His people" (עמנו בזורה—Psalms 72,16). That is why the Midrash (Rashi) significantly points out that יִכְוֹא, a singular form, refers not only to the people but also to God.

*Verses 21–23.* The "hallowing of the Name" of God demands man's unconditional devotion to the precepts of His will. This truth was to be demonstrated in the life of the Jewish people. The purpose of God's educational

\* See footnote, p. ix. (Ed.)

tions which you desecrated in their midst, and the nations will recognize that I am God—is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals his loving kindness in justice, when I shall show Myself through you in My sanctity before their eyes.

**24.** I will take you out from the nations and gather you from all the lands and bring you home to your native soil.

**25.** I will sprinkle pure water

המְחַלֵּל בָּנוֹת אֲשֶׁר חִלּוּתָם  
בְּתוֹכָם וַיַּרְא הָנּוּם כִּי אָנִי יְהוָה  
נִאָס אֶלָּנוּ יְהוָה בְּהִקְרָשֵׁי בְּכָם  
לְעֵינֵיכֶם:

וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הַגּוֹנוֹת  
וְקִבְצָתִי אֶתְכֶם מִכָּל־הָאָרֶץ  
וְהַבָּאתִי אֶתְכֶם אֶל־אֶרְמָחָטָם:

וְוּרְקָתִי עַלְכֶם מִים טְהוֹרִים

plan for the Jewish people was that, ultimately, this truth should be recognized by all mankind. This was the purpose for which the Jewish people has been chosen. Hence, if the Word of God is ever to spread its light over the whole world (Habakkuk 3.4), its purifying power must be proven, first of all, in its impact on the people of Israel. If the קדושה of God is to be recognized by all the nations, Israel must be won for this קדושה before all the others. From the very outset, God's purpose, firm and unchanging, in dispersing Israel among the nations had not been to destroy the Jewish people but to elevate them, ultimately, to the status of God's own nation. Israel's dispersion, then, was in fact a work of Divine mercy: God "had been merciful to His own holy Name."

Israel's ultimate return to its Divinely-ordained calling will reveal God's will in its full invincible power—to קדושה—which even the highest and mightiest among men must yield; (for בקדשי בכם, see our commentary on Chapter 28, Verse 22). Once the will of God has accomplished its great work of purification in the life of the Jewish people, the way will be clear for the universal acceptance of God's will among all the other nations of mankind, בקדשי בכם לעיניהם.

Verse 24 refers to the Divine objectives that were to be achieved through the history of Israel's exile. Above all else, וְלִקְחָתִי אֶתְכֶם מִן־הַגּוֹנוֹת. But this meant that the Jewish people would have to respond as they did when the words were spoken to them in Egypt: they would have to gather together as the people of God and give up their un-Jewish, assimilationist ways. This spiritual unity, the Prophet declares, must come about before there can be a physical ingathering (וְקִבְצָתִי וְנוּ). Only after the people of Israel have achieved this inner reunification will they be entitled, once again, to possess the soil of their homeland (אֶרְמָחָטָם).

Verses 25–27 describe the manner in which the Divine promise will become a reality.

upon you and you will be cleansed of all your impurities, and of all your abominations will I cleanse you.

26. I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit will I place within you, and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a feeling heart.

27. And My spirit I will place within you and will see to it that you will walk in My laws and scrupulously carry out My ordinances.

28. Then you may live in the land which I have given to your forefathers; you will become My people and I, I will be your God.

וְטִהְרָתֶם מַכְלֵל טְמָאֹתֶיכֶם  
וּמִכְלַגְלֻלֵיכֶם אֲטָהָר אֲתֶכֶם:

26. וְנִתְתַּחַי לְכֶם לְבָב חֶרֶשׁ וּרוּחַ  
חֶרֶשׁ אֲתָנוּ בְּקָרְבָּכֶם וּבְסָרְתִּי  
אֲתַדְּלֵב הָאָבָן מִבְשָׁרָכֶם וְנִתְתַּחַי  
לְכֶם לְבָב בָּשָׂר:

27. וְאֲתִידְרֹזְנִי אֲתָנוּ בְּקָרְבָּכֶם  
עֲשִׂיתִי אֶת אֲשֶׁר־בְּחַקֵּי פְּלָכוֹ  
וּמִשְׁפְּטִי תְּשִׁקְרֹו וּמִשְׁתַּמְּמָה:

28. וַיַּשְׁבַּתֶּם בָּאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִתְחַי  
לְאַבְתִּיכֶם וּהֵינֶם לְיָעַם וְאַנְבֵּי  
אֱהֹיה לְכֶם לְאֱלֹהִים:

*Verse 25.* Here we have the timeless message of ככירה: "Whatever your past may have been, no matter where and how you may have strayed, before God, the Master of all the future, you can and will rise up to a new future of purity. Before Him, and by Him, will you be delivered from the seeds of misfortune that you, with your own sins, have deposited into the womb of the future, and from the moral bondage in which you have been trapped because of your sins. You shall rise again before God with a new spirit and a new heart, with a new, pure mind receptive once again to all things godly, joyously going forth toward all that is good and pure" (Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 16,30).

"Fortunate you, O Israel! From whom do you seek purity? Who will make you pure? Your Father in heaven" (יוסט פה.).

*Verses 26–27.* Through His gift of תְּהִלָּה God renews the moral willpower of His people. לְבָב טָהָר – לְבָב חֶדֶשׁ (Psalms 51,12): "A heart receptive to everything pure and good" (לְבָב בָּשָׂר) (ibid.).

וְרֹוח נְכַח – רֹוח חֶדֶשׁ (ibid.) "Thus, by the grace of God, the spirit that has strayed regains the ability to recognize all that is good and true" (רוּחַ). Henceforth, willpower combined with the faculty of cognition will guarantee the realization of God's Law in the life of the Jewish people: וְעַשְׂתִּי אֶת אֲשֶׁר בְּחַקֵּךְ חֶלְטָת.

*Verse 28.* Then, the Prophet declares, Israel will be able to return to the land of its forefathers as God's own nation, having met the unchanging conditions

**29.** When I have saved you from all your impurities, I will call out to the grain and will increase it, and I will no longer inflict famine upon you.

**30.** I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the yield of the field so that you will no longer have to endure the shame of hunger among the nations.

**31.** And when you recall then your evil ways and your actions that were truly not good, you will feel loathing for yourselves because of your sins and your abominations.

**32.** I do not do this for your sake, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice. You will come to know this; be ashamed

29. וְהוֹשַׁעֲתִי אֶתְכֶם מִפְּלָטָמֹותֵיכֶם וּקְבָאַתִּי אֶל־הַקָּנוֹן  
וּרְבִּיתִי אֶתְךָ וְלֹא־אֶתְנַחַן עַלְיכֶם  
רָעֶב:

**30.** וּרְבִּיתִי אֶת־פְּרִי הָעָץ  
וְתִנְבַּת הַשָּׂרָה לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא  
תִּקְחְוּ עֹור חַרְפַּת רָעֶב בְּנָוִים:

וְזָכַרְתֶּם אֶת־דְּرָכֵיכֶם הַרְ�עִים  
וּמַעְלֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר לְאַ-טּוֹבִים  
וּנְקַטְּפָתָם בְּפָנֵיכֶם עַל עֻגְנִתֵּיכֶם  
עַל תְּעֻכּוֹתֵיכֶם:

**32.** לֹא לְמַעֲנָכֶם אֲנִירָשָׁה  
נָאָם אֲרַנִּי יְרֹוחָה יוֹרֵעַ לְכֶם

under which alone its ancestors, too, were promised the possession of אֶרֶץ  
יִשְׂרָאֵל.

*Verses 29–30.* זְקוּרָאתִי: The grain eagerly awaits the moment when it will be permitted to yield its bounty to godly men. We read in Malachi 2,3 הַנִּינְגָּר שֶׁthat God actually had to prevent the grain from giving its bounty to an unworthy nation. Nature knows of no greater joy than to serve man who employs its bounties for his God-ordained purpose.

חַרְתָּת רָעֶב, see our commentary on Chapter 34, Verse 29. How sad that men, whom nature would be only too willing to serve must suffer from famine! The nation of Israel, as foreseen by Ezekiel, would know only one kind of hunger. "Not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of God" (Amos 8,11).

*Verse 31.* See Chapter 20, Verse 43.

*Verse 32.* לֹא לְמַעֲנָתָם (also Verse 22). The people of Israel had forfeited every right to Divine aid long ago. יְיוֹצָא לִפְנֵי: of course, the people would become aware of their dependence on God only when they had found their way back to God after endless wanderings in the "wilderness" of exile.

בָּשׁוּ וְהַכְלִמוּ מִרְכִּיכֶם בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

**33.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: On the day when I will cleanse you from all your sins, I will cause the cities to become inhabited again and the ruins to be rebuilt.

**34.** And the desolate land will be tilled again instead of the desolation that it was in the sight of all that passed by.

**35.** Then they will say: "This land that was desolate has now become like the Garden of Eden, and the cities that were destroyed, laid waste and torn down will be inhabited as fortified [cities]!"

**36.** Then the nations that are left round about you will recognize that I, God, have restored the ruined places and replanted the wasteland—I, God, have spoken, I have already done it!

**37.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His lov-

בָּשׁוּ וְהַכְלִמוּ מִרְכִּיכֶם בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

בְּהָאָמֵר אֶל־נַעֲרָה בְּיוֹסְטָהָרִי  
אַתֶּכָּם מִפְּלָעָן עֲנוֹתִיכֶם וְהַשְׁבָּתִי  
אַת־הַעֲרִים וְגַבְנֵי הַחֲרֻכּוֹת:

וְהָאָרֶץ הַגְּשָׁפָה פְּשָׁבֵר פְּתָחָה  
אֲשֶׁר הַוְּתָעָה שְׁמָמָה לְעֵינִי כָּל־  
עוֹבָר:

וְאַפְּרוּ הָאָרֶץ לְלוֹז הַגְּשָׁפָה  
הַוְּתָעָה בְּגַעֲרָדוֹן וְהַעֲרִים הַחֲרֻכּוֹת  
וְהַגְּשָׁפָות וְהַגְּהֻרְסּוֹת בְּצָבוֹת  
יִשְׁבָּה:

וְיַדְעָו הַנוּם אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁאַרְזָה  
סְבִיבּוֹתֵיכֶם קַוְא אָנָי וְהָהָבְגִוְתִּי  
הַגְּהֻרְסּוֹת גְּפַעַתִּי הַגְּשָׁפָה אָנָי  
יְהֹוָה דָּבָרָתִי וְעַשְׂתִּי ס

בְּהָאָמֵר אֶל־נַעֲרָה יְהֹוָה עֹד אָת

**בָּשׁוּ וְהַכְלִמוּ:** The Prophet's sad and solemn admonition was addressed to the Israel of his day, to the Jewish people that could prolong their exile because of their own unrelenting sins.

**Verses 33–36.** The wondrous rebirth of the Jewish nation, its restoration to its homeland, its transformation from an image of utter desolation to one of Paradise-like splendor (Verse 35)—all this will bring about a change also in the attitude of those other nations **אשר ישארו** who will survive the catastrophes of world history. They, too, will feel the impact of the great change (Verse 36) that will compel them to recognize the supremacy of God.

הַאוֹזֵן (Verse 35).

**דברתי ועשית:** This Divine word holds its own promise of fulfillment.

**Verses 37–38.** The chapter closes with a recapitulation of God's wondrous

ing kindness in justice: I will let Myself be sought by the house of Israel continually, to do it for them; I will multiply them as a flock of men.

**38.** As the flock designated for sacred offerings, as the flock of Yerushalayim on its festivals, so the devastated cities will be filled with flocks of men, and they will recognize that I am God.

**Chap. 37.** 1.\* Then the hand of God came upon me and He brought me outside by the spirit

אָמַר רְשָׁעִים לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעֹשֹׂת  
לְהַמְּאֻרְבָּה אֶתְכֶם כִּצְאוֹן אֲרָם:

38. **כצאו גורשים כצאו ירושלים  
במושעריה בנו תחניינה הערים  
החרבות מלאות צאן אחים וירושו  
כראני יהוה ס**

לו. היה עלי יריה וויצאנו

\* See *Collected Writings* Vol. I, Nissan III; also M. Hirsch, *Hastoroth*, ס' חותם סוף.

promise, couched in the terms of the analogy already known to us from Chapter 34: Israel, God's own flock, gathered around its Divine Shepherd. The lofty concept of sacrifice (**כָּבֵד קְרָבִים**) which the symbolism of the Sanctuary and the words of the Prophets had vainly proclaimed for so long has become reality at last. The **מַעֲדוֹת**, which serve to summon each and every individual member of the Jewish people to a glorious union with God, have also become a reality in the life of God's people. And this allegory of the **דָּם אֶחָד** points to a purpose that has been shared by all mankind from the very beginning: man's destiny as **אֶחָד** inviting all men to be equal in the fulfillment and hallowing of God's will in every aspect of their lives.

**Chapter 37.** The Prophet proclaimed the glorious Divine message contained in Chapters 34–36 to the wretched remnants of a people burdened by the dismal awareness that "our iniquities and our sins lie heavily upon us, through them we will rot away. How, then, can we expect to gain life?" (33,10). True, the Prophet spared no effort to cheer his people with words of hope and promise (*ibid.*, 11 ff.). Even more than in his other prophecies, he made a point of setting the Divine seal of truth upon every brushstroke in his portrayal of Israel's future (see our commentary on Chapter 36, Verse 1). Yet, what assurance was there that the passing of time would not rob this picture of its brilliant colors? Over the centuries, the oppressive impact of repeated disillusionments (which, alas, were to be so abundant in the history of the

ברוח ורוחה ונייחני בתקוד  
הבקעה והריא מלאה עצמות:

of God and set me down in the midst of the valley, but it was full of bones.

Jews in exile) might make it appear that, instead of ascending to new heights, the Jewish people were drifting inexorably toward spiritual corruption and disintegration. Under these circumstances, was it not possible that the picture painted by Ezekiel would in time be dismissed as mere poetic hyperbole, only adding to an existing, all-pervasive mood of despair?

But at this point the Prophet reminds his people of the one blissful certainty that is deeply rooted within the heart and mind of every Jew: the certainty that the day will come when, by God's wondrous almighty power, the dead will rise again. Even if the Jewish nation were to wither and become as "dry bones," the breath of God will stir them to renewed life. As long as you accept חיה המתים as truth, there is no need to despair of the future of the Jewish people.

The Prophet is not introducing the resurrection of the dead as a "new doctrine" of Jewish belief. If the vision described in this chapter is meant to be taken only as a משל—note that our Sages (סנהדרין צב) have not arrived at a consensus on this question—then, since Scripture never uses symbols to introduce previously unknown concepts, the choice of such a parable would imply that the concept of חיה המתים was well-known and accepted among all Jews. If Ezekiel had actually experienced the spectacle of resurrection which he relates here, then he was also the one who heard them exclaim the ancient hymn of homage to God: "God kills and revives; He brings down to the grave but also brings up [the dead]" (I Samuel 2,6).

Let us, together with our Sages (סנהדרין טמ), attempt to trace the origins of the bones that were restored to life through the word of God as related by the Prophet. Were these the bones of the unfortunates who had to pay with their lives for their over-hasty exodus from Egypt which they had started on their own initiative, without any directive from God? Or of men who, in their lifetime, had forfeited the strength that can be gained only by observing the *mitzvoth*, or who, even worse, had been guilty of iniquities that had violated the purity of God's holy place? Or were these the bones of radiantly beautiful Jewish youths who had been captured by a ruthless, victorious enemy and then massacred and crushed into the dust of the Dura valley?

Blind delusion, a lack of trust in God's guidance; despair, a loss of faith in the future guaranteed by God Himself; alienation, a loss of sensitivity to the truths of Judaism; anger that turns against its own sacred heritage; and last, but by no means least, the cruel persecution from alien nations—all these, down to our own day, have helped cover the path of Jewish history with countless

2. And He led me toward them round about and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley and behold, they were very dry.

2. והעכירני עליהם סכיב | סכיב  
ווננה רבות מאר על-פני הבקעה  
ווננה יבשות מאר:

3. And He said to me: Son of mankind, will these bones ever live again? And I replied: You my Lord, God, Who reveal Your loving kindness in justice, only You know it!

וְיָאכֵד אֶל בְּזִידָרִים בַּתְחִינָה  
העֲצָמוֹת הַאֱלָה וַאֲמֵר אֲלֵינוּ יְהוָה  
אַתָּה יְרֻעָתָנוּ

dead. Nevertheless, the wondrous breath of God's almighty power sweeps over these dead with the eternal promise of renewed youth and life.

Furthermore "When Nebuchadnezzar cast Chananiah, Mishael and Azariah into the furnace, God commanded Ezekiel to revive the dead in the Dura valley" (סנהדרין סט). As long as even three men exist whose hearts are filled with true Jewish heroism, the resurrection of the dead will remain truth; it will take place at the very moment when the enemy prepares the death blow to our people.

*Verses 1-2.* 'ה ת', see our commentary on Chapter 1, Verse 3. **הַמִּדְבָּר:** If we are not mistaken, the valley into which the spirit of God now carries Ezekiel is the same valley in which, at the very beginning of his mission, Ezekiel was found worthy to behold, for a second time, the power of God's greatness. Ezekiel is now to experience again, in even more impressive grandeur, the truths and assurances that were revealed to him before.

Initially, however, he does not yet behold הַכְּבָד. Instead, wherever he looks, he sees only dried bones. He sees his people (Verse 11) "scattered over the surface of the earth, bleached, dried bones, disjointed, dispersed; parts that belonged together torn asunder, gone all the bonds that had once bound them together, gone every muscle that had once moved these bones, gone the sensitive skin that had once covered and protected them. Every last trace of vital energy seems gone forever, since Israel has lost that vital element for which alone Israel once arose from among the nations. Israel has lost the very soul of its existence, the Torah." (See *Collected Writings*, Vol. I, p. 25 ff.)

**Because he is a (1.3) Ezekiel does not come near to the bones but reverently circles the valley of the dead at some distance (Rashi).**

**Verse 3.** Will these bones ever rise again? That question can be decided only by God, Whom the Prophet is ready to serve with every fiber of his strength, Whose judgment decrees death but Whose wondrous goodness also

4. Then He said to me: Speak your prophetic word over these bones and say to them: Dry bones, hear the Word of God!

5. Thus has my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, spoken to these bones: Behold, I will bring spirit into you, and you will live again!

6. And I will put sinews on you and cause flesh to cover you, weave skin over you and put spirit into you—and you will live again and recognize that I am God.

7. And I spoke my prophetic word as I had been commanded and, behold, even as I prophesied, there was a noise and, behold, a tremor, and you, bones, moved toward each other, bone to its bone.

8. I looked and, behold, there already were sinews upon them,

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיכָם נְבָא עַל־הָעָצִמוֹת  
הָאֱלֹהִים וְאֶמְرַתְּ אֲלֵיכֶם הָעָצִמוֹת  
הַבוֹשׁת שָׁמְעוּ רְכֻבֵרְיוֹנָה:

5. בָּהּ אָמַר אֶלְעָזָר בֶּן־זְרַחְיָה לְעָצִמוֹת  
הָאֱלֹהִים הַנָּה אָנָי מִבְיאָה בְּכֶם רُוח  
וְחַיָּתָם:

6. וְנַתְתִּי עֲלֵיכֶם גָּדוֹם וְהַעֲלֹתִי  
עֲלֵיכֶם קֶשֶׁר וְקָרְמָתִי עֲלֵיכֶם עֹזֶר  
וְנַתְתִּי בְּכֶם רُוח וְחַיָּתָם וְיַדְעָתָם  
כִּי־אָנִי יוֹנָה:

7. וְנַבְאַתִּי בְּאָשֶׁר צִוָּתִי וַיָּהִי  
קוֹל בְּהַנְּבָא וְהַגְּדָרָעָשׂ וְתַקְלוּבָה  
עָצִמוֹת עָצֶם אֶל־עָצָמוֹ:

8. וְרָאָיתִי וְהַגְּדָלָתָם גָּדוֹם

gives life (א' ב'). In the presence of death, the lips of men must tremble and fall silent; only the eyes dare look up to Him, trusting in His mercy.

*Verses 4–6.* God addresses His words even to these countless bones which, in the eyes of mere mortals, seem doomed to death beyond recall. Even these bones can be restored to life. But this can be accomplished only through the spirit. Only if, from the very outset, there is assurance that the spirit, too, will re-enter the shell of the physical body that is meant to serve it, will death yield to life.

*Verses 7–8.* Amidst the solemn course of history, amidst the roar of thunder and the tremors of the earth, the bones begin to stir. Parts that had lain numb regain feeling; a sense of mutual belonging is reawakened among the dispersed members of the House of Jacob; those that were scattered reunite. New ligaments are formed; the body of the Jewish nation receives a new structure of muscles and nerves and a new protecting cover of skin. But even after this organic reconstruction, despite this regained unity, despite the new life revealed in this physical rebuilding, this life is only an illusory existence

flesh had grown over them, and He also wove skin over them—but there was no spirit in them.

**9.** Then He said to me: Speak your prophetic word to the spirit, say it, son of mankind, and speak to the spirit: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice; Come from the four winds, O spirit, breathe into these slain and they will come alive again.

**10.** Then I spoke my prophetic word as He had commanded me. And the spirit came into them and they lived again, and they stood there upon their feet, a very, very great host!

**11.** And He said to me: Son of mankind, the bones are the entire

וְבַשֵּׁר עַלָּה וַיִּקְרֹם עַלְיָהֶם עֹור  
מִלְמַעַלָּה וְרוּחַ אֵין בָּהֶם:

**9.** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי הַנֶּבֶא אֶל־הָרוֹת  
הַנֶּבֶא בְּזִדְאָרָם וְאֶמְרָתָ אֶל־הָרוֹת  
בְּהִיאָמָר אָרְנוּ יְהוָה מָרְכָבָע  
רוּחוֹת בְּאֵי הָרוּחַ וַיַּחֲנִיתִ בְּבָרוּגִים  
הָאֱלֹהִים וְוַחֲיוּ

**10.** וְהַנֶּבֶא תֹּאֵת בְּאֲשֶׁר אָנֹנִי וְתַבּוֹא  
בָּהֶם הָרוּחַ וְוַחֲיוּ וַיַּעֲמֹדוּ עַל־  
גְּלִילֵיכֶם חִיל גָּדוֹל מָאָרְקָמָאָר: ס

**11.** וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵי בְּזִדְאָרָם הַעֲצָמוֹת

and the body of the Jewish nation is still dead as long as it lacks spirit, that spirit which alone constitutes the living soul of this nation's body.

**Verse 9.** This spirit is breathed into the "slain" people of Israel *per se*. For we must discharge our mission as Jews in the midst of the rest of mankind no matter where we may dwell on earth, and regardless of changing climatic and geographic conditions. "No matter where and into what isolation you may have to wander, whither you may go, אֶרְכָּת רְרוֹת, to all the four corners of the earth, north or south, east or west, you will wear upon your body the same reminder of that one mission which remains forever unchanged and which you must discharge wherever you may go" (Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 15.41). No matter where God may disperse you, the spirit sent by Him will find you and give you life—*כִּי כָּרָבָע וְרוֹחַ הַשְׂמִים סְרַחִית אַתֶּם*—Zechariah 2,10).

**Verse 10.** חיל גָּדוֹל מָאָר פָּאָר: cf. Verse 2. For the reviving breath of this Divine spirit nothing is impossible. In the valley of the dead, the countless dried bones arise and, rekindled to life by the spirit of God, unite to form one great host.

**Verse 11.** Even if had come to such a pass that the casual observer would see its members only as bones strewn over a valley of death

house of Israel! Behold, they say: "Our bones have become dry, our hope is lost, we are cut off, left to ourselves!"

**12.** Therefore, speak your prophetic word and say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I shall open your graves and bring you up from your graves as My people and bring you home to the soil of Israel.

**13.** You will recognize that I am God when I open your graves and lead you out from your graves as My people.

**14.** I will place My spirit into you and you will live; I will grant you rest on your native soil and you will recognize that I, God, have spoken and also done it—is the pronouncement of God.

הָאֱלֹהֶ בְּלִדְבּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל הַמָּה הַגָּנָה  
אֲמָרִים יְבַשׁוּ עַצְמוֹתֵינוּ וְאֶבְרָהָה  
תִּקְנֹתֵנוּ נְגַנּוּנוּ לְנָנוּ:

**12.** לְכֹן הַגְּבָא אֲמָרָתָ אֱלֹהִים כִּהְיָה  
אָמָר אָרְנוּ יְהֻוָּה הַגָּה אָנָּי פָּתָח  
אַתְּ-קְבָרוֹתֵיכֶם וְהַעֲלִיתִי אֶתְכֶם  
מִקְבָּרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי וּמִבָּאָתִי אֶתְכֶם  
אַל-אַרְמָתָ יִשְׂרָאֵל: ס

**13.** וְיַעֲשֵׂתֶם כַּיְדַּאֲנִי יוֹתָה בְּפִתְחֵי  
אַתְּ-קְבָרוֹתֵיכֶם זִבְחָלֹותִי אֶתְכֶם  
מִקְבָּרוֹתֵיכֶם עַמִּי:

**14.** וְגַתְתִּי רֹזֶחֶת בְּכֶם וּתְיוֹתֶם  
וְהַנְּחַתִּי אֶתְכֶם עַל-אַרְמָתֶם  
וְיַרְעַתֶּם כַּיְדַּאֲנִי יוֹתָה דִּבְרָתִי  
עֲשָׂוָתִי נְאָסִירָהוּ: פ

and decay, so that Israel itself would despair of its future, yearning only for the moment when its dried bones would be lowered into the mass graves of historic oblivion. . .

*Verses 12–14.* Even then, the darkness of Israel's history in exile, no matter what it may bring, will be pierced by one ray of light: the light of God's almighty, wondrous power holding out to His people the promise of a new, eternal future, a promise powerful enough to open the graves of the dead so that Israel may be led forth from the darkness of death. Then, strengthened and rejuvenated through the Divine spirit of God's Torah, Israel will be able to start out on its journey to the homeland where, as God's own nation, it will find the eternal peace and prosperity promised and prepared for Israel by God Himself.

הַדְּבָרִי וְצַדִּיקָה סָמֵךְ: Who could still remain mired in helpless despair if God Himself has spoken, if God Himself has shown Israel the only possible and ever-accessible path upon which it can find renewed youth and vitality? Knowing all this, who would dare attempt to lead the Jewish people upon any

**15.** Then the Word of God came to me:

**16.** As for you, son of mankind, take for yourself one piece of wood and write upon it: "For Judah and the sons of Israel, his companions." Then take a piece of wood and write upon it: "For Joseph, the tribe of Ephraim and the entire house of Israel, his companions."

**17.** And join one to the other so that they will become one log for you, united in your hand.

**18.** And when the sons of your

**15.** וַיֹּאמֶר רְبָרְיוֹתָה אֲלֵי לִאמְרָה:

**16.** וְאַתָּה בְּנֵי אָדָם קַח־לְךָ עֵץ אָחֵר  
וְכִתֵּב עַל־יוֹลֵדָה וְלִבְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל  
חֶבְרוֹן וְלֹקֶחْ עֵץ אָחֵר וְכִתֵּב עַל־  
לְיֹסֵף עֵץ אָפְרַיִם וְכָל־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל  
חֶבְרוֹן:

**17.** וְקַרְבֵּב אַתָּם אָחֵר אָלְאָחֵר לְעֵץ  
לְעֵץ אָחֵר וְהִיוּ לְאָחָדִים בְּיָדְךָ:

**18.** וְכָאָשֶׁר יוֹאמְרוּ אֲלֵיכָם בְּנֵי עַמְקָם  
חֶבְרוֹן קָרֵי.

other path? Ezekiel is the prophet of our exile, our guide through our exile and the prophet who will also lead us out of our exile.

*Verse 15.* A nation that has accepted the concept of *חַיִת המתחם* as a given fact should also accept, as a matter of course, the assurances given to it by God for its future.

*Verses 16–17.* *עֵץ* is a tree, a tree trunk, a piece of wood, or a wooden stick. It is clear from the explanation to Verses 19 and 22 that the two pieces of wood were matching halves of part of a tree trunk which, in the hand of the Prophet, should have joined to form the whole of one single trunk (see Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, *ibid.*). The words inscribed upon the pieces of wood leave no doubt about the symbolic meaning of the Prophet's act. He takes two pieces into his hand, implying that the pitiful remnants of Judah will form a closed entity (*חֶבְרוֹן*, singular), to the exclusion of others. Facing Judah, the scattered Ten Lost Tribes, led by the tribe of Ephraim, will rise to form the "whole House of Israel," an all-embracing entity (*חֶבְרוֹן*). The Prophet only needs to bring the two pieces closer together and already, like the two natural halves of one whole, they will join together to form one single piece of wood, *חוּיו לְאָחָדִים*, *בְּיַדךָ*, and will remain thus united as long as they will allow themselves to be encompassed by the hand of the Prophet. This will be a miracle accomplished by the hand of the Prophet as an instrument serving the Word of God, the *רוֹה הָה* (see Verse 14).

*verb, pi'el, imperative. For מְאֹתָדִים, cf. Genesis 11,1.*

*Verse 18.* *בְּנֵי עַמְקָם*, see Chapter 3, Verse 11. The stress is on *ונגיד*. *הַלֹּא חַנְדֵּז* is literally "to present," "to bring toward" (*גִּנְזֵר*), to make a person aware of

people will say to you: Will you not explain to us what these mean to you?

**19.** Then say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will take Joseph's piece of wood which is in the hand of Ephraim and his companions, the tribes of Israel, and I will join it to Judah's piece of wood, and I will make them into *one* log and they will become *one* in My hand.

**20.** But the piece of wood upon which you write shall remain in your hand before their eyes.

**21.** And say to them: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from amongst the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them on every side and bring them home to their soil.

לאמֵר בְּלוֹא־תִּגְנַד לָנו מִה־אֶלְהָה  
לְךָ:

**19.** רַבֵּר אֲלֵיכֶם כִּיהָאָמֵר אֲרַצִּי  
יְהוָה הָנָה אַנְיָ לְקַח אֶת־עֵץ יוֹסֵף  
אֲשֶׁר בְּיוֹד־אֱפָרִים וּשְׁבָטִי וּשְׁرָאֵל  
חֶבְרוֹן וְנִתְחַתֵּ אֶת־עֵץ  
יְהוָה וְעַשְׂתֶּם לְעֵץ אֶחָד וְהַיִּ  
אֶחָד בִּירֵי:

**20.** וְהַיִּ העֲצִים אֲשֶׁר־תִּכְתַּבְּ  
עַל־יָדֶם בָּרוּךְ לְעַינֵיכֶם:

**21.** וְרַבֵּר אֲלֵיכֶם כִּיהָאָמֵר אֲרַצִּי  
יְהוָה הָנָה אַנְיָ לְקַח אֶת־  
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל מִבֵּין הַגּוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
הַלְּכוֹדָשָׂם וּקְבָצָעִי אֶתְם מִפְּנֵיכֶם  
וְהַבָּאֵת אֶתְם אֶל־אֶרְמָתֶם:

חֶבְרוֹן קָרֵי.

a fact (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 3,11). The people wish to have the Prophet explain to them that which their eyes do not dare to look upon.

*Verse 19.* אֶתְם וְנַחַתִּי אֶתְם: God will join the tribes of Israel *פְּלִיז*, together with their leader, Ephraim, *עַצְמָה* into a close union (*תְּהֻתָּה*) with Judah. *חַזִּי לְאָחָד*: They will not only become uniform parts of one whole, but *לְאַחֲרִים* they will form such a thoroughly integrated unit that no outsider will be able to realize that they were once divided.

*Verse 20.* The pieces of wood are to remain together in the Prophet's hand also while he proclaims the promises that now follow and that are already known to us from earlier chapters. The content of these promises and the requirements they impose upon Israel are also written upon these pieces (*אֲשֶׁר עַל־יָדֶם*).

*Verse 21.* בָּרוּךְ לְךָ (see our commentary on Chapter 36, Verse 24) denotes the inner unity that must be achieved before the *בְּנָתָן* can take place; hence *אֲשֶׁר הָלַט שֵׁם* (they went there of their own free will). Even in dispersion there

22. And I will make them into *one* nation on earth, on the mountains of Israel, and *one* king will be king to them all, and they will no longer become two nations and not be divided into two kingdoms again.

23. They will not defile themselves any longer through their idols, through their abominations and all their evildoings, and I will help them out of all their dwellings where they sinned, and I will cleanse them; they will become a nation unto Me and I will be God to them.

24. And My servant David shall be king over them, and one shepherd will be for all of them, and in My ordinances they will walk, and My laws they will observe and carry them out.

25. And they will dwell, upheld by the land that I gave to My ser-

22. וְעַשֵּׂיתִי אֶתְכֶם לְנוֹי אָחָר בָּאָרֶץ  
בְּהָרָיו וּשְׂרָאֵל וּמֶלֶךְ אָחָר יְהוָה  
לְכָלָם לְמֶלֶךְ וְלֹא יְהִי־עוֹד לְשָׁנִים  
נוֹיָם לֹא יִתְּצֻעַר לְשָׁתִי מִמְּלֹכֹת  
עוֹד:

23. וְלֹא יִטְמְאוּ עוֹד בְּגַלְוִילֵיכֶם  
וּבְשֻׁקְוֹצֵיכֶם וּבְכָל פְּשָׁעֵיכֶם  
וְהַשְׁעֲתִי אֶתְכֶם מִכֶּל מְוֹשְׁבְתֵיכֶם  
אֲשֶׁר חָטָאוּ בָּהֶם וְטָהָרֵתִי אֶתְכֶם  
וְהַוְּדֵלֵי לְעַם וְאַנְּיִ אֱלֹהִים לְהֶם  
לְאֱלֹהִים:

24. וְעַבְרֵי רֹוד מֶלֶךְ עֲלֵיכֶם וְרוּאֵת  
אָחָר יְהוָה לְכָלָם וּבְמִשְׁפָּטִי יְלַכֵּךְ  
וְחִקּוֹתִי יִשְׁמְרֵךְ וְעַשֵּׂו אֶתְכֶם:

25. וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי

יהו כרי

was no need for the Jewish people to give up that inner cohesion which would have saved them from assimilation.

*Verse 22.* Nevertheless, *הַרְיִישָׁרָאֵל* (see Chapter 36) will accept only *נוֹי* *כְּעֵמֶן כִּשְׂרָאֵל* *נוֹי אֶחָד*; that is, the united Israel of which King David said, *נוֹי כְּעֵמֶן כִּשְׂרָאֵל* (*II Samuel* 7,23), Israel, whose "mountains" bow in homage before Mount Zion and whose entire land has become one *נוֹי*. As for *רוֹד קָדֵשׁ*, see our commentary on Chapter 36, Verse 14.

*Verse 23.* *הַשְׁעַתִי אֶתְכֶם*: God will give them the strength to abandon the un-Jewish ways they have acquired in the course of their long exile in alien lands. God Himself will help them attain *סְהָרָה* (see Chapter 36, Verses 25 ff.).

*Verses 24–25.* These verses outline the principal functions of kings in the Davidian dynasty (cf. Chapter 34, Verses 22–24 and our commentary, *ibid.*). For the meaning of *מֶלֶךְ*, see Hirsch Commentary, *Genesis* 10,10. *וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל הָאָרֶץ* *אֶת שְׁבִיה* (*Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus* 18,25).

vant Yaakov, in which your forefathers dwelt; upheld by it, they will inhabit it, they and their children and their children's children, unto eternity, and My servant David will be their prince forever.

26. And I will establish for them the covenant of peace; it will be an eternal covenant with them; I will place them and multiply them, and I will set My Sanctuary in their midst forever.

27. And My presence will be

לעַבְדֵי לִיעָקָב אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁבֹּדֶךָ  
אֲכֻבּוֹתֶיךָ וַיִּשְׁבֹּבָ עַלְיהָ הַמֶּה  
וְגַנְגִּים וְבָנִי בְּנִיהֶם עֲדָעָלָם  
וְרוֹדָעָבָד נְשִׂיא לְהָם לְעוֹלָם:

26. וְכָרְתִּי לָהֶם בְּרִית שָׁלוֹם  
בְּרִית עֲלָלָם יְרִיעָה אֶתְחָם וְגַתְתִּים  
וְהַרְבִּיתִי אֶתְחָם וְגַתְתִּי אֶתְ  
מִקְדָּשִׁי בְּתוֹךְם לְעוֹלָם:

27. וְהִיא מִשְׁקָנֵי עַלְיהֶם וְהִיִּתִי

אֲשֶׁר נָתַחְיָה לְעַבְדֵי לִיעָקָב," which I have given to My servant Jacob." According to a profound comment by our Sages, Jacob bequeathed to his descendants the בריח החינוך (the inner bar which invisibly joined together the beams עצי שיטים Exodus 26) which would surround the Tabernacle. The common Divinely-ordained destiny that united all the parts of the Jewish people was to make it impossible for the nation ever to be divided again. But now that the spirit of Jacob had departed from the memory of his descendants, the "beams," the tribes of the Jewish people, had drifted apart and therefore the sacred soil had rejected them. Only the spirit of Jacob will be able to bring about the reunion symbolized by the Prophet's acts. Until that time ארץ ישראל will have to wait for the return of the sons of Jacob.

Verses 26–27, see Chapter 34, Verse 25. The connection between וְכָרְתִּי אֲשֶׁר נָתַחְיָה לְעַבְדֵי לִיעָקָב and מִקְדָּשִׁ בְּתוֹכְם and הַרְבִּיתִי אֶתְחָם implies the realization of Moses' words שׁוֹבֵה הַ רְבּוֹת אֶלְפִי יִשְׂרָאֵל God's Sanctuary will find its place "not among isolated individuals but among thousands whose number will grow into myriads" (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 26,11).

Israel of the future will be the place of that Sanctuary of God which will endure forever and which will bring about the fulfillment of the requirements and promises symbolized by the original Tabernacle: העשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשָׁכְנָהֵי בְּתוֹכְם (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 25,8). The Sanctuary summons us to "consecrate every aspect of our lives, both public and private, to the fulfillment of God's Law." —ונָתַחְיָה אֲשֶׁר נָתַחְיָה לְעַבְדֵי לִיעָקָב: The promise implicit in משכן is the protection and blessings to be provided by the Divine Presence and demonstrated in the happiness and prosperity of our lives, both public and private—גְּדוֹלָה מְשֻׁכָּנֵי עַלְיהֶם.

Israel is now ready and willing to meet the requirements of God's Law.

with them; I will be God to them and they will become a nation to Me.

**28.** And the nations will recognize that I, God, sanctify Israel, since My Sanctuary will remain in their midst forever.

**Chap. 38.** 1. Then the Word of God came to me:

לְהַם לְאֱלֹהִים וּמִתְהַיּוֹדֵל לָעֵם:

וַיֹּרֶעוּ הַגּוֹטִים כִּי אֲנִי יְרֻחָה  
מִקְרָשׁ אֲתִי־יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּדִיןְתִּי  
מִקְרָשׁ בְּתוֹךְ לְעֹזָם: ס

לְחַדְּשֵׁי דְּבָרַיוֹתָה אֲלֵי לְאָמָר:

Therefore the cherubim tapestries representing the blessed nearness of God's will descend upon the "beams" that symbolize the Jewish people closing ranks about His Law as one united nation. These are the basic implications of **וְהִי יְהוָה לְעֵם** (see Leviticus 26,12).

**Verse 28.** When the nations of the world will see how the nation of God, by sanctifying every aspect of its life, has found in its everlasting Sanctuary a true Paradise (Chapter 36, Verse 35), they, too, will rise in unison to render homage to God: **וַיֹּרֶעוּ הַגּוֹטִים וְהִיא יְהוָה לְיַעֲמֹד**.

And so the vision of our Prophet ranges from the "valley of dried bones" symbolizing hundreds or perhaps thousands of years of his people in exile to the eternally bright and shining Sanctuary of our future.

**Chapter 38.** This eternal Sanctuary (**בֵּית עֲולָמִים**), along with the fulfillment of the yearnings of the Jewish people and the hopes of all mankind, represents **אַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים**, "the goal of the history of nations." Chapters 40 ff. are devoted to that theme. Chapters 38 and 39 contain revelations concerning the battles that will be fought against Gog and Magog. Even a cursory look into these chapters will make it abundantly clear that these revelations refer to actual historic events which (as expressly stated in Chapter 38, Verse 16) will also take place **בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים**, at a time when all the predictions set forth in earlier chapters will have come to pass in the history of Israel.

Israel has been granted salvation and will be united on its native soil for all time. At that time the promise **כִּי אֲנִי ה'** in the concluding verse of the preceding chapter will be fulfilled. The non-Jewish world, too, will be redeemed after God has waged, on holy ground, the final struggle with a world that had refused Him allegiance. (In addition to the Book of Ezekiel, the Book of Zechariah, especially its concluding chapter, gives us revealing details about these battles.) The interpretations presented in these writings make it easy to refute the superficial approach of many non-Jewish Bible

scholars. Here, too, we must follow the guidance of our Sages who view the apocalyptic battles of Gog and Magog as "the culmination of all history" (Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,29). According to our Sages, the words אשר י' קרא לך נחיריה והם (Genesis 49,1) which our Patriarch Jacob uttered on his deathbed, predicted "the downfall of Gog and Magog" (בראשית רכח ז"ח). David's proclamation of homage to God, "Yours, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory and the majesty! Yours is everything in heaven and on earth, Yours the dominion over all that seek in any manner to rule over others" (I Chronicles, Chapter 29,11) will then become a reality through this battle: ו מלחתנו גוג ומגוג (ברכתי נח.).

Our Hallel psalms that sing of the momentous events in Jewish history which will ultimately culminate in the universal recognition of God, likewise allude to the battles of Gog and Magog (פסחיהם קיוח) and to the irrevocable promises of God's mercy that have accompanied Israel—chastened by חוכחה—into exile. These promises, too, will eventually be fulfilled most gloriously in the "days of Gog and Magog" (מנילה יא.).

Psalm 2, viewing a world in which kings of the earth will rise up against God and His anointed in order to "rend the bonds asunder and to cast off the cords," also refers to the wars of Gog and Magog (עבודה וזה ג).<sup>1</sup>

In שנת קייח we are told that he who keeps the Sabbath in its entirety (שלוֹש טעויות) will be spared from the wars of Gog and Magog. He who genuinely observes the Sabbath thereby already experiences the deliverance that will come to the rest of mankind only after unspeakable suffering.

In view of the foregoing, this chapter's description of the ultimate apocalyptic struggles leaves no doubt as to their historical significance. However, the identity of the nations and the names of the climactic battles given here present questions which we can discuss only in terms of conjecture. We must not forget for even a moment that these events may still elude our understanding. Even our Patriarch Jacob had to confine himself to mere allusions when he attempted to unveil the אזהרת הרים to his children.

"According to Zechariah 14,16 all the desperate efforts of the nations to struggle against the bonds that tie them to God will ultimately end with the nations paying homage to God in Jerusalem and gathering together each year to celebrate the Festival of Sukkoth. We will presume to go even further: We would suggest that the name of גוג in Chapters 38 and 39 of Ezekiel refers to the leader in the final struggle of man against God and the manifestations of God's reign on earth. It seems obvious that the name of Gog is derived from גוג, the making of a roof, firm and steady, as contrasted to טומחה, the fragile thatch of a foliage covering. Indeed, all of world history can be understood symbolically in terms of this contrast.

"Men have been led astray by a dangerous delusion. They have been given the power and the skills to build themselves דפנות גוּ (walls) to separate

2. Son of mankind, turn your face toward Gog, to the land of Magog, the prince, the head

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and protect their territory from their fellow creatures that dwell side by side with them on earth. They therefore think that it is also a rightful function of their power to shelter themselves from that which dwells above them—from God and the impact of His almighty power. They believe they have the right to take their fate into their own hands and, symbolically, to proclaim the self-assuredness of mankind with solid roofs designed to safeguard their independence from God. This, in essence, is the struggle between the opposing concepts symbolized by גג and טוכה, the "shelter illusion" that gives man no real peace as opposed to the serene trust in God's protection implicit in the symbol of the טוכה. The history of the world began with the construction of a tower of man's self-worship, an edifice meant to storm the very heavens, but it will end with the raising of humble huts that stand for a serene life marked by allegiance to God" (Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 29,13).

We believe we may add the following thought: Gog in the present chapter is the leader of the nations (Verses 2 and 6) whose progenitors are listed in the tenth chapter of Genesis as sons of Japheth. Note, however, that Verse 5 of the present chapter names also nations (Meshech and Tuval) which Genesis lists as descended from Cham. If we recall the prophetic words of Noach which (as interpreted by the Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 9,25 ff.) sum up "the entire history of mankind—its beginning, its conclusion and its intermediate span," we may view Gog as the most powerful personification of Japhethic culture which, in accordance with the promise ויהי כנען עבד למו, will succeed in defeating the values symbolized by Cham (see our commentary, Chapter 39, Verse 11). However, the redemption of mankind will be brought about not by Japheth but by Shem. It is from the sons of Shem that men should learn "so to build their homes on earth that God will dwell in their midst, so to fashion all of human life on earth that the glory of God will return to earth to dwell in the midst of mankind" (Hirsch Commentary, ibid.). Through the defeat of Gog, the prophecy ישבcn באהלי שם will ultimately triumph. Once Gog has been defeated, men all over the world will build dwelling places dedicated to the service of God, dwellings in whose midst the "everlasting Sanctuary" will find its abode, securing the blessed nearness of God's presence ויהי משכני עלייתם (Chapter 37, Verse 27).

**Verse 2.** ארץ המנוג, probably in contrast to ארץ ישראל (Verse 8). It is the land (אֶ-תֶן; the א represents the origin of a subject) which is the most powerful exponent of the principles symbolized by Gog. שׁאַל: Some non-

of Meshech and Tubal, and pronounce your prophetic word over him.

3. Say: Thus has my Lord spoken. God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I am turning to you, Gog, prince, head of Meshech and Tubal.

4. I will lead you astray, I will put hooks in your jaws and make you and your whole army go forth, horses and riders, all dressed to perfection, a great assembly, with buckles and shields, all of them handling swords.

5. Persians, Kush and Phut with them, all with shield and helmet;

6. Gomer and all the flanks of his army, the house of Togarmah,

ארץ המונון נושא ראש משך  
ויתבל והנכו עלייה:

ו אמרת פה אקר ארען יהוה  
הננו אליך גון נושא ראש משך  
ויתבל:

ו שוגבთיך וגנתתי חחיהם  
בלחגיך והוציאתי אותך ואתה  
כל-חילך סוסים ופרשים לבשי  
מקולל כלם קгал רב צנה ומגן  
תפשי חרבות כלם:

א פרנס כוש ופוט אTEM כלם מגן  
וכובע:

ב גמר וכל---אנפיה בית

Jewish commentators identify **ראש** as an unknown national entity; this is questionable.

**Verse 4.** In his delusion that there is no God, Gog does not suspect that, even at the pinnacle of his power, he is only a helpless tool in the hand of God. In this verse, as in Chapter 29, Verse 4, the words imply utter helplessness. **שׁובבְחַךְ:** God permits Gog to go astray (cf. הפטר ודעך היא שׁובבְחַךְ Isaiah 47,10), increasingly obsessed by the delusion **מי** שׁובבְחַךְ (ibid.): "I am, and there is no one else beside me," only so that even Gog may eventually find his way back to God. By deliberately leading the nation of Gog astray, God guides it back to the right path. This thought, too, is implied in **שׁובבְחַךְ**—see Verse 8, and **וְלֹא שׁובב בָּרוּךְ לוֹ:** רְכִיחֵי רְאֵי תְּרֵשֶׁתְךָ הַזָּהָרְתִּי אָוֹתָךְ: When Gog prepares to do battle with God, God guides him no less than He guides His own people toward its redemption (Verse 8), see Chapter 23, Verse 12.

**Verse 6.** **אנפיה** "ירכחים": **רְכִיחֵי צָפֵן** denotes that part of a space which represents a focal point in relation to which all the other parts are merely 'antechambers.' Therefore, **רְכִיחֵי צָפֵן** is that focal point of the north toward which the whole north looks as the goal of its pilgrimages"

the aspiration of the north and all the flanks of his army—many nations with you.

7. Only be prepared and have (everything) ready for yourself, you and your entire assembly that rallies around you, be a guard to them.

8. For many days now you have been the object [of God's attention], in the legacy of the years you will not come to a land (whose population) has been brought back, snatched from

תונגרמה ורकתי צפון ואת-כל  
אנפיו עמים רביים אתה:

7. הכו ותקנו לך אתה וכל  
קהלך הנקהלים עליך והיית להם  
למשמר:

8. מימים רבים תפרק באחריות  
השנים תבוא לא-ארץ |  
מושבכת מחרב מבקצת  
מעטים רבים על חמי ישראל

(Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 48,3). was the goal for pilgrimages from the north of the Land of Israel.

*Verse 7.* משר, "watchman" or "guard," alludes characteristically to the position assumed by Gog in the midst of the nations that accepted his leadership. These nations feel secure in Gog's protection. The Jewish concept of trust in God, as expressed in Psalm 127,1: אם ה' לא ישמר עיר שוא שומר "If God does not guard a city, the guardian has watched in vain" is utterly foreign to Gog.

*Verse 8.* מימיים רבים : From time immemorial, Gog, too, has been the object of God's פקידה: God had been watching Gog and his evil ways. That which is to take place was foreordained by God from the very beginning. "A distinction must be made between אחריות and קץ: קץ is the end, the conclusion. אחריות is that which comes after the end, the aftermath. Thus, in this context, the connotation of אחריות is, after the present developments have run their course; hence, the legacy from the days, the goal of the history of the nations." (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,1).

It is in God's פקידה that world history should reach its goal on sacred soil. Gog has gone to war against a land which has regained its God-ordained character through the merit of the conduct of the people now dwelling in it. ארץ ישראל is once again identical with ישראל. Israel has come home again ארץ ישראל מושבכת מחרב, or, more accurately, it has been brought home again, for without the help of God's almighty power Israel would long ago have merged into the nations of the earth and fallen to the sword of a hostile world. If the "mountains of Israel" have risen again from their ruins to renewed life, this could come to pass only because God Himself had brought His people home.

the sword, gathered from among many nations, against the mountains of Israel that continually lay in ruins; but it is brought forth out of the nations, and they will all dwell in safety.

**9.** You shall go up and you shall come like a devastation, like a cloud to cover the land will you be, you and all the flanks of your army and the many nations with you.

**10.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: It will come to pass on that day that words will come into your mind and you will ponder an evil plan;

**11.** And you will say: "I will go up against the land that lies there without wall; I will move

אשר־היו לחרכה פְּמִיר וְהַיָּא  
מעמִים הַזְּאָה וּוְשָׁבֹעַ לְבָטָח  
בְּלָם:

וְעוֹלִית בְּשׂוֹאָה תָּבוֹא בְּעֵנֶן  
לְכָסֹות הָאָרֶץ תְּהִי אַתָּה וְכָל־  
אֲגִפִּיךְ וְעַפְוִים רְבָים אַתָּה: ס

וְכֹה אָכַר אַרְגֵּן יְהוָה וְתִינְהָ  
בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יַעֲלוּ דְּבָרִים עַל־לְבָבֶךָ  
וְחַשְׁבָּעַת מִחְשָׁבָת רְעָה:

וְוְאַמְרָתְךָ אַעֲלָה עַל־אָרֶץ  
פְּרָרוֹת אָבוֹא נַשְׁקָטִים יִשְׁבְּיָ

God, under Whose protecting hand alone Israel could live free from care. It is against this nation, which through its **baton** represents the symbol of the **state**, that Gog is preparing to do battle. (Verse 2) has taken up the struggle with **ארץ ישראל**.

**Verse 9:** see Psalms 35,8. In the present context it denotes physical desolation.

**Verse 10:** **דברים**: That which at first seemed to be mere words will evolve into a diabolical plan.

**Verse 11.** In the eyes of Gog, **ארץ ישראל** and the state that has arisen there represent a mockery of his own way of life. How dare a nation, surrounded by a world armed to the teeth, establish a state that does not measure its strength in terms of fortifications and that teaches its citizens to live happily and trustingly in the spirit of the truths symbolized by the **טנה**? For even though we have read in Chapter 36, Verse 35 that the cities of the Holy Land will some day be inhabited as fortified cities, Gog sees the land as an **ארץ פרמות**. According to the philosophy of Gog, of what good are "walls" (**דְּמֻտָּה**), no matter how firm, as long as the city has no solid "roof" to shelter it from above? But as for Israel, it rejoices in the fulfillment of the prophecy

against those that rest undisturbed, that dwell in safety, all of them dwelling without walls, they have neither bolts nor gates."

**12.** In order to loot and take spoil; to stretch out your hand to ruins that are inhabited, to a people unified from the midst of nations, acquiring goods and pursuing a livelihood, living at the navel of the earth;

**13.** Sheba and Dedan and the merchants of Tarshish and all their lions will say to you: Did you

לְבָטֵח בָּלִים וַשְׁבִים בְּאַיִן חֹמֶת  
וְכָרִיך וּרְלָתִים אֵין לְהַמָּה:

12. לשְׁלֵל שְׁלֵל וְלַבּוּ בָּזָה לְהַשְׁבֵּט  
וְרָק עַל-חֶרְכּוֹת נְוַשְׁבַת וְאַל-עַם  
מְאֻפָּף מְנוּסָם עֲשָׂה מִקְנָה וּקְנָזָן  
וְישָׁבֵי עַל-טַבּוֹר הָאָרֶץ:

13. שְׁבָא וּרְדוּן וּסְחָרָיו תְּרַשֵּׁשׁ  
וְלְלַכְפִּירָה יֹאמְרוּ לְךָ בְּלִשְׁלָל

(Zechariah 2,9) that God Himself would become a "wall of fire" round about His people, and the people of Judah, strong in אֱמֹנוֹת and בְּתֹחוֹן, sing a hymn (Isaiah 26) proclaiming that its city had become strong since God had built walls and a rampart for it.

But Gog will not tolerate such a challenge.

*Verse 12.* לשְׁלֵל וְגָרָר: Even before the battle has begun, Gog is confident of victory; he sees Israel's pillage completed even though he has not yet begun to fight. Gog need only stretch forth his hand to deal Israel the final blow! Israel's habitations are only ruins that happen to be temporarily occupied and that, within moments, will turn back into the desolation they were before. Israel is a nation מְאֻפָּף מְנוּסָם (מְרֻאָה, cf. Verse 8), which implies the connotation of עֹז: a people "detached" from all others—see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,1). Isolated from all the other nations, Israel has no mighty allies to rely upon. In the eyes of Gog, Israel is so foolish as to believe that it can withstand any threat to its survival as long as it puts its trust in God. How can a nation, declares Gog, simply follow peaceful pursuits and be willing to live without strategic safeguards in a land that is situated in the very "navel of the earth," at the crossroads of civilization. Is this not a land that had been drawn into every development of world history and should it not therefore feel dependent on powerful neighbors for its very existence? A country that follows such a course under such circumstances, Gog reasons, is doomed from the very start.

*Verse 13.* שְׁבָא וְגָרָר, see Chapter 27: Powerful mercantile nations are lying in wait (וְכָל כְּמִירָה) like rapacious young lions for this pitiful little "nation of shopkeepers" (cf. Chapter 19, Verse 2). They have only

come to loot, did you assemble your company in order to take spoil; are you bringing silver and gold in order to receive property and acquisitions in exchange and to garner unexpectedly great gain?

14. Therefore, son of mankind, speak your prophetic word and say to Gog: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Surely, on the day when My people Israel will dwell free of care, you will know it:

15. And you will come from your place, the aspiration of the north, you and many people with you, all riding on horses, a great assembly, a mighty host—

16. And come up against My people Israel like a cloud, to cover the land—it will come to pass in the legacy of days that I will bring you up against My land that the nations may recognize Me when I show Myself in My holiness through you, Gog, before their eyes!

17. Thus has my Lord spo-

שָׁלֵל אַתָּה בָּא בְּלִבְנֵו בְּן הַקָּהָל תִּקְהַל לְשֹׁאת | כֶּסֶף וְזֶבֶב לְקַחַת מִקְנָה וְקַנְנוֹ לְשָׁלֵל שָׁלֵל גְּרוֹלָם

14. לְבָנֵו הַגָּבָא בָּנוֹ אָדָם וְאָמְרָתָךְ לְנֹגֵן כִּיה אָפָר אֲרֵנִי יְהוָה הַלּוֹא בְּיָמֵינוּ הַהוּא בְּשַׁבְּתַת עַמִּי וְשָׂרָאֵל לְבַטְחַת תְּרֻעָה:

15. וּבָאָתָּה פָּמְקוּמָךְ מִירְכָּתִי צָפֹן אַתָּה וְעַמִּים רְבִים אַתָּה רַכְבִּי סְפִים בְּלָם קָתֵל גְּרוֹל וְתִיל רַבְבָּה

16. וְעַלְיִתְּ עַל־עַפְויִי יְשָׂרָאֵל בְּעַנְןָם לְכַסּוֹת הָאָרֶץ בְּאֲחֶרֶית הַיָּמִים תָּהִנָּה וּבְבָאוֹתִיךְ עַל־אַרְצִי לְפָעֵן דְּעַת גְּנוּס אָתֵי בְּהַקְרָשִׁי בְּעַלְעִינֵיכֶם גָּנוּס

17. כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹנִי יְהוָה הַאֲתָה

contempt for their tiny neighbor and the sad fate which they think awaits it. Their contempt can be felt from the jeers with which they accompany the campaign of Gog against Israel: Is Gog out on a raiding expedition or is he going as an honest trader (see Malbim) to acquire goods against payment in gold and silver, pocketing a nice profit in the process? (שָׁלֵל here as in Proverbs 31,2 וְשָׁלֵל לֹא יִסְרֵ, literally booty, "and by extension denoting an acquisition to which one was not entitled, or which one had not expected"—(see Hirsch Siddur, p. 286).

*Verses 14–17.* חִזּוּץ: The simple fact that the people of Israel have the presumption to live with trust and without concern about their future will

ken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Are you the one of whom I have already spoken in earlier days through My servants, the prophets of Israel who prophesied in those days for years ahead that I would ultimately bring you against them?

**18.\*** It will come to pass on that day, the day when Gog will come against the soil of Israel, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, My flaming fury will rise in My wrath.

\* Cf. Mendel Hirsch, *Hesderoth*.

הוּא אֲשֶׁר־דָּבַרְתִּי בְּיָמִים  
קְרֻמּוֹנִים בֵּין עֲבָרִי נְבִיאִי  
וַיְשִׁרְאֵל הַגְּבָאִים בְּיָמִים הַהֵם  
שְׁנָנִים לְהַכִּיא אָוֹתָךְ עַלְיוֹם:

וניהו | ביום ההוא ביום בוא  
נון על-ארמות ישראל נאם ארני  
יוהה תעלה חמתית באפריה

be sufficient reason for Gog to pounce upon them (וְכֹאַת). The land of Gog is רְכָבִי טוּפִים כָּלֵם; see Verse 6. In contrast to Gog, Israel has vowed for all time: עַל סָמֶן לֹא נַרְכֵב "We will not mount horses, and we will no longer refer to the work of our hands as 'our god'" (Hosea 14,4). At long last Israel has become, as stated in this chapter over and over again, עַם יִשְׂרָאֵל, "My people," the people of God.

Gog does not realize that אחרית הימים is approaching (see Verse 8). בואת-והבאותך: That time appears to be "coming" on its own, but in reality it will be brought on by God (see Verse 4). חזע-לטפען דעת: All that Gog sees is Israel's weakness; therefore, Gog is certain that he will win the day. However, God will reveal Himself in all His קරושה, in His victorious might (see Chapter 36, Verse 23) in the battle with Gog, so that אחרית הימים the goal of all history will be achieved.

**Verse 17.** What Gog fails to understand is that his decision to take up the struggle with Israel, the nation of God, on sacred soil, is only part of God's own plan that has guided the history of mankind from the very beginning and that has been proclaimed by our Prophets from days of yore. The Sages identify these particular prophets as Eldad and Medad: וַיֹּהֶנְכָו בְּתִנְחָה, עַל פְּסִיקָה (see Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 11,29).

**Verses 18–20.** “הַבָּה denotes the rage that seethes within; וְאֵת, the emotion that becomes evident to the outside. צָבָרָה (from צָבָר) is the fury that exceeds all bounds, a fury in which man is literally ‘beside himself’” (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 49,7). In the terrible events that will now occur “God will step forth

19. And in the assertion of My rights and in the fire of My towering anger, I commanded: Surely, on that day there will be a tremendous trembling on the soil of Israel.

20. The fish of the sea will tremble before Me, the birds in the heavens, the beasts in the fields, all the creeping things that move on earth, and all of humanity on the surface of the soil [that was given to] man; and the mountains will be demolished, and the steps will topple, and every wall will crash to the ground.

19. וְבַקְנָאֹתִי בְּאֲשֶׁר־עֲבָרָתִי דָּבָרָתִי אֶסְלָא | בְּיוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיא רָעֵשׂ גָּרוֹל עַל אֶרְכָּת יִשְׂרָאֵל:

20. וּרְעֵשׂוּ מִפְנֵי דָגַן הַיּוֹם וְעוֹף הַשָּׁמָיִם וְחַיַּת הַשָּׂרָה וְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׁ קָרְטָשׁ עַל־הָאָרֶץ וְכָל־הָאָרֶם אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְנֵי הָאָרֶץ וְגַהְרָתוֹ הַהֲרָם וְגַפְלוֹ תְּפִירָנוֹת וְכָל־חָזָקה לְאָרֶץ תְּפּוֹל:

and take up the struggle with these nations" (Zechariah 14,3). Gog has the audacity to set foot on אֶרְכָת יִשְׂרָאֵל, the "sacred soil of man" (אָדָם; see our commentary on Chapter 7, Verse 2); he has the audacity to contend for this soil with a nation determined to dedicate its very life to the ideals of pure humanity (אָדָם, see Chapter 34, Verse 31), ideals for whose realization this particular soil has become linked to this particular nation for all time. Gog has the audacity to attempt to keep God from taking possession of His land. He attempts to use its natural resources as an ingenious bulwark behind which he will feel secure.

But the moment has come when God will assert His rightful claim (כְּקֹתֶת) not only to אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל but to all the earth. That is why "the soil of Israel" will tremble (see Zechariah 14, 4-5). This upheaval will spread to all of nature. Then mankind, beholding the collapse of what it considered its firmest foundations, תְּמִימָנוֹת אֲשֶׁר עַל פְנֵי הָאָרֶץ, will understand at long last that the earth is no longer willing to support human beings who would seek to alienate it from its God-ordained destiny as אָדָם. Amidst this upheaval, once the foundations of Gog's power have collapsed in pitiful ruins, God will take possession of His land again.

Thus כָּל הָרָקָעָן כְּעַבְנָה (Zechariah 14,10). Compared to Jerusalem all the rest of the earth will become one vast, empty plain. מִדרְגָּנוֹת, תְּמִימָנוֹת הַהֲרָם, cf. תְּמִימָנוֹת הַהֲרָם (cf. "steps," or "levels"; i.e., this leveling process will extend also to the natural elevations between the towering mountains and the man-made walls employed by Gog in his strategy of "defense".

**21.** And I will call upon all My mountains to [raise] the sword against him, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—the sword of every man will be against his brother!

**22.** I will enter into judgment against him with pestilence and blood, flooding rains and hailstorms, fire and sulfur will I rain upon him and upon the flanks of his army and on the many peoples who are with him.

**23.** I will reveal Myself in My greatness and My holiness, and I will be recognized in the sight of many nations, and they will recognize that I am God.

ו. וְקָרָאתִי עַלְיוֹ לְכָל־הָרִי חֶרֶב  
גָּאֵם אֲלֹנִי יְלֹוָה חֶרֶב אִישׁ בָּאָחִיו  
תְּהִירָה:

22. וּנְשִׁפְטָתִי אֶתְךָ בְּרָכָר וּבְרָם  
וּנְשִׁמְשָׁמְשׁוּפָפָפָ וְאַבְנִי אַלְבְּכִיר אַשָּׁשׁ  
וּפְרִית אַקְמָטִיר עַלְיוֹ וְעַלְאַגְּפָיו  
עַלְעַפְמִים רְבִים אֲשֶׁר אֶתְךָ

23. וְהַתְּגַדְּלָתִי וְהַתְּקַרְשָׁתִי  
וְנוֹרָעָתִי לְעַינֵּי גּוֹים רְבִים וּגְדוּשָׁה  
כִּי־אָנִי וְהָרָה: ס

*Verse 21.* **לְכָל הָרִי**: God summons all the forces of nature and all the other powers that Gog has pressed into the service of his "shelter illusion" to join Him in the campaign against Gog. **חֶרֶב אִישׁ וּגְרָר**: This is an apocalyptic struggle of all against all, a struggle that will end in the collapse of Gog's philosophy. This historic confrontation will demonstrate most strikingly what happens when nations decide that they can do without God. They think they can protect themselves against God but who, then, will protect men from one another lest they destroy each other and themselves?

*Verse 22.* **אַלְבִּישׁ**, see Chapter 13, Verse 11. **נִשְׁמָם** is the specific term for 'rain,' **מָסָר** is the all-inclusive term for anything that descends from the skies" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 11,6). A second **מִבְּלִי** threatens to engulf the earth and mankind.

*Verse 23.* And yet, "at evening time there will be light" (Zechariah 14,7). From amidst the terrors of night a new and glorious morning will dawn, casting its brilliant rays over all mankind. **הַתְּגַדְּלָתִי וְהַחֲרוֹתִי**: Israel's fervent prayers and hopes that persisted over hundreds and perhaps even thousands of years were not childish dreams. The *Kaddish* had not been recited by Israel in vain.

**Chap. 39.** 1. And you, son of mankind, speak your prophetic word over Gog and proclaim: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Behold, I turn to you, Gog, prince, head of Meshech and Tubal!

2. I will lead you astray, toward your desolation I will lead you, from the aspiration of the north I will lead you up and bring you against the mountains of Israel.

3. And I will strike your bow from out of your left hand, and I will hurl your arrows out of your right hand.

4. On the mountains of Israel you will fall, you and all the flanks of your army and the nations that are with you; I have given you as

לט וְוַתֹּאמֶר בָּנְדָרִים הַגְּבָא עַל-  
גּוֹן וְאָמְרָת כִּי אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה  
הַגְּנִיעַ אֶלְיוֹק גּוֹן נְשִׂיא רַאשׁ מֵשֶׁחַ  
וְתַכְלֵל:

2. וְשַׁבְבַּתְיָךְ וְשַׁשָּׁתִיךְ  
וְהַעֲלִיתִיךְ מִירְכָּתִי צָפֹן  
וְהַכְּאֹתֶךְ עַל-הָרִי וּשְׂרָאֵל:

3. וְהַפְּוִתִּיכְשַׁתְעַ מִינְךּ שְׁמָאוֹלָן  
וְחַצִּיךְ טִינְךּ יְמִינְךּ אֲפִילָל:

4. עַל-הָרִי וּשְׂרָאֵל תַּפְולֵ אָתָה  
וְכָל-אָנְגָּלִיךְ וְעַפְתִּים אֲשֶׁר אָתָה

**Chapter 39.** The Prophet's message in the previous chapter deals with events that will come to pass only **בְּאַחֲרַת הַיָּמִים**. When will occur? When will the day come to which the Prophet was bidden to refer again and again (Verses 10, 14, 18)? What can we do to hasten the coming of this day that holds the fulfillment of all the hopes of the Jewish people, indeed, of all mankind? In answer to this question (Verse 8) Ezekiel was commanded to address yet another message to Gog (Verse 1).

**Verse 2.** see Chapter 38. Verse 4. The meaning of **שְׁשָׁשׁ** is not clear; this is the only Scriptural passage in which the term occurs. Gesenius suggests that **שְׁשָׁשׁ** = **שְׁשָׁאשׁ** (the relationship is similar to that between **סְסָמָה** in Isaiah 27,8 and **סְסָמָה** in Isaiah 14,23). If this is correct, **שְׁשָׁשׁ** might be interpreted as an intensified form of **שָׁאשׁ** and would have the same connotation as **עַלְיָת** **שְׁשָׁה** **תְּבָא** in Chapter 38, Verse 9; cf. our commentary on Chapter 38, Verses 15–16.

**Verse 4.** **לְעַזִּים** are birds of prey that will welcome Gog's downfall because they hope to feed on his carcass; but see also Verse 17. On **צָפֹחַ** **כִּי**, see Chapter 17, Verse 23.

food for the birds of prey of every kind of wing and for the beasts of the field.

5. You will fall headlong in the open field, for I have spoken, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

6. And I will send fire against Magog and against the trusting inhabitants in distant isles, and they will recognize that I am God.

7. And I will cause My holy Name to be recognized in the midst of My people Israel, and I will not allow My holy Name to be desecrated further, and the nations shall recognize that I, God, am holy in Israel.

8. Behold, it is coming, it has happened, is the pronouncement

לעִיט צָפֹר בְּלֶכְנָפַת  
השְׁרָה נְתַחֵק לְאַכְלָה:

5. עַל־פָּנָי הַשְּׁרָה תִּפְלֹל בַּי אָנָּי  
רְבָרְתִּי נָאָס אַלְגִּי יְרוּחוֹ:

6. וְשַׁלְחָתִירָאָש בְּמִנּוֹן וּבְיוֹשָׁבִי  
הָאִים לְגַטְחָה וְרַעֲשָׂו כִּידָאַנִּי יוֹהָה:

7. וְאַתְּ־שָׁם קְרָשִׁי אוֹרְעִישׁ בְּתוֹךְ  
עַמִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל לְאַדְתָּל אַתְּ־שָׁם  
קְרָשִׁי עֹז וְוַרְעָז הָנוּם כִּידָאַנִּי  
יוֹהָה קְרוּשׁ בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

8. הַנָּה בָּאהּ וְנַהֲתָה נָאָס אַרְגָּנִי

*Verse 5. See Chapter 29, Verse 5.*

*Verse 6. The fire that devoured Gog will spread to Magog, that is, to every place and everyone that had ever given aid and comfort to the philosophy of Gog (Chapter 38, Verse 2). Sweeping to the remotest islands on earth, it will put an end, once and for all, to the arrogance of the nations which, as opposed to the בְּשֻׁמְן shown by Israel (Chapter 38, Verse 14), have denied God and put their trust in their own strength.*

*Verse 7. In Israel, too, this confrontation will wipe out forever those tendencies that had estranged it from God for so long. These trends had won supporters even in Israel, until the time of that last terrible battle (see Zechariah 14,14). From that day forward Israel will be aware of its obligation to the holy Name of God. The whole world will then behold the rebirth of a way of life in a nation and its people that see the unconditional acceptance of God's will as the sole, supreme object of their existence (see Chapter 37, Verses 27-28). There was a time when God tolerated a diminution, indeed, a "desecration" (אַלְגָּי), as it were, of His holy Name in order to educate Israel and the rest of mankind. But those days are gone forever.*

*Verse 8. That glorious day can come at any time.* הַנָּה בָּאהּ וְנַהֲתָה אַזְרִיאַת הַיּוֹם

of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice—it is the day that I have proclaimed!

**9.** Then the inhabitants of the cities of Israel will go forth and make fires and use as fuel armor, shield and bucklers, bows and arrows, lance and spear—and fan the fires with them for seven years.

**10.** They shall not carry wood from the field and cut none from the forests, for they will fan the fire with armor; thus will they rob

נִהְיוֹת הוּא הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר דָבַרְתִּי

וַיֵּצֵא יוֹשֵׁבָנוּ עַרְיוֹן שָׂרָאֵל וְבָעֵדָר  
וְהַשִּׁיקוּ בְּגַשְׁקָם וּמִבְּנָן וְצִנָּה בְּקַשְׁתָּה  
יְכָחָזִים וּבְמַקְלֵר וּבְרַמֶּח וּבְעַרְיוֹן  
בְּהָם אַשְׁשָׁבָע שְׁנַיִם:

וְלֹא יִשְׁאַג עָצִים מִזְהָשָׁה  
וְלֹא יִחְטֹבּוּ מִזְהָעָרִים כִּי בְּגַשְׁקָם

Israel can bring salvation to itself and to the rest of mankind any day, **אֱמֹן** חספָנוּ בְּכָלָו.

**Verse 9 ff.** The verses that now follow describe the manner in which Israel will celebrate its triumph after the most violent struggle ever to take place in world history. Israel has captured huge quantities of the spoils of battle. Will they be placed into arsenals for an awestruck posterity to admire? No! This will be the beginning of the time when "the swords will be broken up into plowshares and the spears into pruning hooks; nation will no longer lift up the sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2,4). "The chariots from Ephraim and the horses from Jerusalem will be destroyed; the bow of battle will be destroyed" (Zechariah 9,10). The fields will be covered with tragic reminders of a phase in history which, by the grace of God, will have gone forever; the inhabitants of the cities will come forth to retrieve the remains which seemingly are of no use any longer, and they will be truly put to worthwhile use as fuel. For seven years the peaceful homes of the citizens will be bright with bonfires proclaiming that the Sabbath of God has begun, which **משבֵית מלחותה פָּר קָהָה וְתָרָץ** "will cause wars to cease unto the end of the earth" (Psalm 46,10).

**טַל** does not mean "to kindle a fire" but "to heat" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 78,21). **טַל** denotes weaponry, war materiel as a whole (*Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, p. 292-293).

**Verse 10.** **אָשָׁר אָמַר לִי:** For too long forests were the sources of supply for men for tools of bloodshed, their toppling treetrunks echoing the moans of ravaged nature. Now at long last, nature, too, has its Sabbath. "Then all the trees of the forest shall also sing for joy" (Psalms 96,12).

those that rob them and plunder those that plunder them, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

11. On that day I will give Gog a place in Israel that will be his grave: the valley of those passing over to the eastern shore of the sea; this will bar the way of those that pass through. There they will bury Gog and all his noisy throng, and they will call it the Valley of the Multitudes of Gog.

יבערור־אָשׁ וְשַׁלְלוֹ אֶת־שְׁלִילָהּ  
וְקַזְוּ אֶת־בְּנוֹיָהּ נָאֵם אֲרָנִי  
ירוהה: ס

וְוְגַעַת בַּיּוֹם הַהֹּא אַתָּה לְגַעַת  
קָקוּסִים־שָׁם קָבֵר בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל גַּעַת  
הַעֲבָרִים קָרְמַת הַנֶּס וּלְסַמְתָּה הַיָּא  
אֶת־הַעֲבָרִים וְקָבְרוּ שָׁם אֶת־גַּעַת  
וְאֶת־כְּלַי־הַמֹּנוֹת וְקָרְאוּ גַּעַת בְּמַוְן  
גַּעַת:

**וְשַׁלְלוֹ:** That is how Israel will deal with the spoils it has won from this final struggle. This is Israel's proud, final answer to a world which set out to plunder Israel's cities and countryside.

*Verses 11 ff.* At the same time, however, victory has imposed a sad duty upon the Jewish people: the burial of the masses of dead left from the battle. The word of God has specified the site that is to remain the burial place of the fallen enemy for all time: a valley which had been the crossroads for travelers to the "east coast of the sea" (is this a reference to the Dead Sea?).

**טַבְמַת הַיָּא אֶת־הַעֲבָרִים:** This valley will bar the path of the travelers (see M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*), for Gog and his multitudes will now be buried there. (או, see our commentary on Chapter 31, Verse 19).

There was a time, now fortunately gone forever, when Israel, too, succumbed to the temptations held out by the **הַטָּמֵן**, the noisy throng of the nations and, as a result, had itself become a "throng, surging in utter confusion" (see Chapter 5, Verse 7 and Chapter 7, Verse 11). By so doing, Israel had almost dug its own grave, but God in His wondrous power, restored His nation to renewed life. Frail human glory, ending in the grave, can no longer lead Israel astray. As Israel prepares the grave of Gog, it casts off forever the delusion that once alienated the people and hence also the land of Israel from their Divinely-ordained purpose and covered them with **טוֹמָאָה**.

Our Sages (בראשית רבבה ל' ז פין רשי) view God's command concerning the proper burial of Gog as a belated reward for a meritorious act performed by Gog's ancestor, Japheth. **לְפִי** **שַׁהְוָא** **טוֹרְטוֹ** **שֶׁל** **יְתַחַת** **שְׁכַחַת** **אֶת** **עֲרוֹת** **אָבִיו** **לְפִיכְךָ** **זֶה**: Because Japheth had covered the nakedness of his father, Noach

12. The house of Israel will be burying them for seven months in order to cleanse the land.

13. All the people of the land will be burying and the day will be their glory when I shall reveal Myself in My honor, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

14. Permanently assigned men will be chosen who travel through

12. וְקִבְרּוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמַעַן  
טֹהֻר אֶת-הָאָרֶץ שְׁבָעָה חֲרָשִׁים:

13. וְקִבְרּוּ בְּלִיעָם הָאָרֶץ וְהַנְּהָלָה  
לְשָׁם יוֹם הַקָּדָשִׁי נָאָם אַלְגִּי יְהוָה:

14. וְאַנְשֵׁי תְּפִיר וּבְרִילָה עֲבָרִים

(Genesis 10,2), his remote descendant, Gog, was entitled to a proper grave to cover his own body. The same feeling of respect and awe that caused Japheth to avert his eyes from his father's shame bids us to "give a decent burial to the body of our deceased fellow man because his shell is a physical representation of his personality in our midst and must therefore be spared the indignity of being viewed in death" (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 21,23).

*Verse 12.* We can understand the zeal with which בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל, the community of Israel, performs this task. For it is now up to Israel to restore טהרה to the land. (Perhaps that is why Verse 12 specifies the number 7—i.e., שְׁבָעָה חֲדָשִׁים—which recurs throughout Scripture in the laws of טומאה וטהרה). The טהרה of the land and the nation is in jeopardy as long as there are unburied dead in the land: יְהִי קָבוֹר חַקְרָנוּ וְנוּ וְלֹא תִּסְמַח אֶת אַרְטָמָן אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹקִים וְנוּ (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

*Verse 13.* "All the people of the land" will participate in this task. By doing everything in their power to restore טהרה to the land (Verses 14–15), the people make themselves worthy ( ראוי להם לשם) of the designation פָּמָת הארץ, in the sense in which it was defined by our Sages (*Torath Kohanim* on Leviticus 20,2; see also Hirsch Commentary, ibid.): For such a nation which, of its own free will, complies with its God-ordained destiny was the world created. Or, as another interpretation has it, שָׁמֵת עַדְיָן, שָׁמֵת אֶת-הָאָרֶץ: This is a people that, by its total compliance with these laws, has made itself worthy of possessing the land.

שָׁמֵת להם לשם: The loving kindness characteristic of Judaism will receive well-deserved recognition also from the non-Jewish world (Rashi). יְהִי הַכְּבָדָה: For this Jewish virtue, having developed under the ennobling, hallowing regime of God's Law, will truly glorify the Name of God in the world as a most eloquent שָׁמֵת.

*Verses 14–15.* Men will be appointed to assist "those who pass through"

the land, to bury, with those who pass through, those that remain on the surface of the land, in order to cleanse it; after the end of seven months they will make a search.

**15.** If those that pass through the land and someone sees a human bone, he shall place a marker beside it until the gravediggers have buried it in the Valley of the Multitudes of Gog.

**16.** And the name of a city shall be Hamonah, and thus they will cleanse the land.

**17.** As for you, son of mankind, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Say to the

בָּאָרֶץ מִקְבְּרִים אֶת-הַעֲבָרִים  
אֶת-הַגּוֹתְּרִים עַל-פָנֵי הָאָרֶץ  
לְטַבְרָה מִקְצָה שְׁבֻעָה-חֶרְשִׁים  
נְחַלְרוֹ:

ז. וְעַבְרֵז הַעֲבָרִים בָּאָרֶץ וּרְאֵה  
עָצָם אָרֶם וּבָנָה אֲצָלוֹ צְיוּן עַד  
גָּבְרוֹ אֶתְנוֹ הַמִּקְבְּרִים אֶל-גִּיאָ  
בְּכוֹן גָּנוֹן:

ח. וְגַם שְׂמֵעֵיר הַמּוֹנָה וּטְהָרָה  
הָאָרֶץ: ס

ז. וְאַתָּה בָּנוֹ אֶרְם כִּיה-אָמַר |  
אָדָני יְהוָה אָמַר לְצַפּוֹר גָּלְכָנָה

in burying the corpses in the valley designated for that purpose. After the specified seven months have passed, they are to search the land for any remaining unburied corpses and to transfer to the valley even scattered bones which they had to provide with a place of burial and with a distinguishing mark in accordance with Jewish Law (ה. טוער קון).

*Verse 16.* Once a city has been given the name meant to commemorate the wretched errors of mankind that had caused the downfall of so many nations (see Chapters 31–32), including the nation of Gog, וְסִהּוּר הָאָרֶץ the work of ~~טָהָרָה~~ will be complete. Then the city will rise on soil that has been cleared of all sin, with only its name left to recall a tragic epoch in the history of mankind, an era that has become part of the past, never to recur again.

*Verses 17–20.* Once more the Word of God comes to the Prophet, a message that, again, addresses itself to this, the final, most gigantic struggle in the history of the world. The purpose of this new message is to implant into our national consciousness the view we are to take of that final, terrible confrontation between God and a mankind gone mad with self-adoration. We should be filled with contempt at the sight of the "heroes of battle," the "princes of the earth" that have amassed every conceivable resource to take up the struggle against God Who, in the meantime, has invited the birds of the skies and the beasts of the field to the sumptuous feast He will prepare for them in the mountains of Israel.

feathered fowl of every kind and to all the beasts of the field: Assemble and come, gather together from everywhere for My meal, for I am preparing a great feast for you on the mountains of Israel; and you will eat meat and drink blood.

18. The flesh of heroes will you eat and the blood of the princes of the earth will you drink: rams, lambs, goats, bullocks, all fattened in Bashan!

19. You will eat fat to satiation, get drunk on the blood of My meal which I prepare for you.

20. You will get your fill at My table, of horse and rider, of heroes and warriors, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

21. And so I will set My glory among the nations; all the nations shall see My judgment that I have carried out and My power which I have laid upon them.

ולכל אחינו השורה הקבצוו וכלאו  
האספנו מסביב עליון בחוי אשר  
אגני זבח لكم זבח בדול על הארץ  
ישראל ואכלתם בשר ושתיתם  
רְמָ:

18. בשר גבורים תאכלו ורמס  
בשׂוֹיָה הארץ תשׂחו אילים קרבים  
עתודרים פרים קרייאי בשׂוּם:

19. ואכלתם---תלב לשבעה  
ושתיתם גם לשבעון מזבח  
אשרין בחתי לכם:

20. ושבעתם על-שלחני סום  
ונרכב גבור وكل-איש מלחה נאם  
אלני יהונה:

21. ונתקעי את-כבודי בנויים וראז  
כל-הנויים את-משפטיו אשר  
עשיתי ואת-זקיי אשר-שפטתי  
רְמָ:

לעת As we read these verses, we can think of the words of Isaiah (17,14): “ערב והנה בלחה בטרם בקר איןנו” “At evening time it was a horror, but when it is morning, it is no more.” “זה חלק שוטינו וגועל לבוינו.” “This is the portion of those that would despoil us, the lot of those that would loot us.”

In this context, does not denote “birds of prey” (see Verse 4), for these creatures were expressly “invited” by God Who has prepared the feast for them: כי הכך ה זבח הקריש קראו (Zephaniah 1,7).

ברכב: “Chariots.” The reference is to the warriors that man the chariots.

Verse 21. “The nations raged like the roar of the seas; they surged like the rushing of mighty waters” (Isaiah 17,12). The waves have now subsided

**22.** But the house of Israel will recognize that I, God, am their God—from this day forward.

**23.** The nations, too, will understand that the house of Israel went into exile only because of its own guilt, for they betrayed Me and I concealed My face from them; I delivered them in the hand of the enemy so that they all fell by the sword.

**24.** I dealt with them according to their uncleanness and their evil acts when I concealed My face from them.

**25.** Therefore, thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: Now I am (already) bringing back the

22. וְגַרְשָׂו בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּי אֲנִי יְהֹוָה  
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם מְרוֹחִים הַהּוּא וְהַלְּאָהָה:

23. וְגַרְשָׂו הַנּוּם כִּי בְּעַמְּךָ גָּלוּ  
בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל עַל אֲשֶׁר מְעַלְוָדִי  
וְאַסְתָּר פָּנֵי מִמֶּם וְאַתֶּנָּם בְּנֵי  
אֲרִיכֶם וַיַּפְלֹּל בְּחֶרְבָּכֶלֶם:

24. כְּפָמָתֶם וּכְפָשֻׁעֶיכֶם עֲשִׂיתִי  
אֲתֶם וְאַסְתָּר פָּנֵי מִמֶּם: ס

25. לְכָן כִּה אָמַר אָלֹנִי יְהֹוָה עֲתָה  
אֲשִׁיב אֶת־שְׁבִית יִצְחָק וְרַחֲמָתִי

שבות קרי.

and God reigns on high ז (אָדָר נְטוּרָה ה') in solitary splendor (Psalms 93.4). Henceforth, His throne shall be firmly established: גַּנְּכָן כְּפָאַךְ מְאָה.

*Verse 22.* This final, momentous experience has given Israel the moral fortitude to live henceforth in absolute, everlasting obedience to God and His Law: בְּאַחֲרַת הַיְמִינָה וְשַׁבַּת עַד ה' אֱלֹקֵינוּ וְשִׁמְעָת בְּקָלוּ (Deuteronomy 4.30).

*Verse 23.* The nations have changed their view of the Jewish people's place in history. In their delusion they thought they had conquered Israel when, in fact, they were only tools in the hand of God. Now they know the truth: Israel can never be defeated unless it defeats itself. Israel will live as long as it will allow God to live in its midst. There was a time when Israel appeared to the nations as נָגֵר מְפָשֵׁךְ וּמוֹתֵךְ (Isaiah 18.2), a people "defenseless and weak." Now Israel stands before the nations as פָּס נָגֵר מְהֹלָה (ibid.), a nation they should have feared and respected all along because God Himself lives in its history. (See Chapter 18, Verses 2 ff. of Isaiah, which also deals with these final battles of history).

*Verse 25.* לְכָן: A most significant statement. Every phase of history, guided by God Himself, is meant to bring about this wondrous future: עֲתָה אֲשִׁיב הַיְמִינָה וְהַלְּאָהָה: Israel's ingathering begins at the very moment it is sent into exile: עֲתָה אֲשִׁיב הַיְמִינָה וְהַלְּאָהָה: Israel's dispersion among the nations is in itself an act of Divine compassion.

exiles of Yaakov, and I have mercy upon the entire house of Israel, and I assert the rights of My holy Name.

**26.** But they will have to bear their shame and all their faithlessness toward Me when they will (some day) dwell without a care on their soil without anything to disturb their rest;

**27.** When I will bring them back altogether from the nations and gather them from the lands of their enemies, and when I stand in their midst in My holiness in the sight of many nations;

**28.** Then they will recognize that it was I, God, their God, when I led them to the nations into exile

כל-בָּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקֹנַתִּי לְשָׁם  
קָרְשִׁי:

26. גַּנְשׁוּ אֶת-כְּלֹפָתֶם וְאֶת-כְּלָלֶם  
מְעֻלָּם אֲשֶׁר מַעַלְדָּבִי בְּשַׁבְּתָם  
עַל-אֶדְמָתָם לְכַטֵּח וְאֵין מַחְרִיד:

27. בְּשׁוּבָבִי אָוֹתֶם מִזְרָעָמִים  
וּקְבָצָתִי אָתֶם מִאֲרָצֹת אִיבִּיהם  
וּגְקֻרְשָׁתִי בָּם לְעֵינֵי הָגּוּם רְבִים:

28. וַיַּרְאֶשׁ כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים  
בְּרִגְלֹותִי אָתֶם אֱלֹהָגּוּם  
חֶסֶר א.

וּדְהַמִּתִּי: God will not cease, even for one moment, to assert (וּדְהַמִּתִּי) the prerogatives of His holy Name and its recognition throughout the world. On שבתו (Shevuto), see Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 85,2.

**Verse 26.** God in His never-ceasing mercy will restore to them everything they have lost. The only humiliation that God cannot and will not erase from their midst is the shameful memory of their most wretched errors. That memory will weigh heavily upon them, especially when they contemplate the miraculous fulfillment of all God's promises (Leviticus 26,5–6). But this memory will serve, at the same time, to keep them from ever again surrendering to weakness; see Chapter 36, Verse 31. "in the form of לה" and in the connotation of "לְלִי" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 4,7) may serve to add emphasis to this expression (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 20,6).

**Verse 27.** "בְּשׁוּבָבִי": "Generally, the word שׁוּבָבִי is used in Scripture to denote returning an object repeatedly or completely to its former state or condition" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 23,3). Israel's return from the Babylonian exile was only the first phase of its ultimate, complete ingathering (see Jeremiah 50,19).

**Verse 28.** At no time was הָאֱלֹהִים more their own God than when He led them into exile. This exile was הַכִּסָּה (see Chapter 22, Verse 21, our

and then gathered them to their native soil so as not to leave any one of them behind there.

**29.** I will no longer need to conceal My face from them, having poured out My spirit over the house of Israel, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 40.** 1. In the twenty-fifth year of our exile, at the beginning of the year, on the tenth of

וְכִנְסָתִים עַל־—אֶרְמָתֶם לְאַדְ—  
אוֹתֵיר עֹזֶר מְקֻם שֵׁם:  
29. וְלֹא־אֲסֹתֵיר עֹזֶר פָּנֵי מִזְבֵּחַ  
אֲשֶׁר שִׁפְךָתִי אֶת־רוּחִי עַל־בָּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל נָאֵם אֲלֹנִי יְהוָה: פ

ט ו בְּעָשָׂרִים וּחַמֵּשׁ שָׁנָה  
לְנַלּוּתֵנוּ בְּרָאֵשׁ הַשָּׁנָה בְּעַשְׂרֵה

commentary, ibid.); it prepared the way beginning with the partial after נָאֹלוּה the Babylonian exile עַל אֶרְמָתֶם to its homeland.

**Verse 29.** Then God will never again be forced to withdraw His loving concern from His people, because Israel will have become the bearer of the spirit of God and as a result the time will come when the spirit of God "shall be poured out over all flesh" אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ פֶּלֶךְ בְּשָׁרֶךָ (Joel 3,1).

**אֲמֵן הִיא:** These words place the seal of truth upon the hopes of Israel and of all mankind as documented in this chapter.

**Chapter 40.** בְּרָאֵשׁ הַשָּׁנָה בְּעַשְׂרֵה לְחֶרֶשׁ: According to our Sages, the *yovel* year begins on the tenth day of the month of Tishri. The date given in Verse 1 of the present chapter was the first Yom Kippur of a *yovel* year that the Prophet spent in exile. On that day he was privileged to experience wondrous visions and to receive momentous messages which he presents in these final chapters of his book.

On that day, which summoned the subjugated and estranged among God's people to accept freedom and called upon all the sons of Israel to return to their God, on that day it was given to the Prophet to behold a vision of the rebuilt, eternal Sanctuary of the future and to receive the basic instructions for the establishment of the State of God that would endure forever. These chapters, then, open with the timeless message which the Divinely-ordained institution of the *yovel* year confirms for us even in exile. Our Sanctuary and our state are ready for us; they only await the moment when we will resolve to give heed to God's Shofar-call that opens the *yovel* year.

the month, in the fourteenth year after the city had been conquered, on that very day the hand of God came upon me and He brought me there.

2. Through Divine manifestations He brought me to the land of Israel and set me down upon a very high mountain and on it was [something resembling] the structure of a city to the south.

3. He brought me there and behold, a man whose appearance . . .

לחרש בארבע עשרה שנה  
אחר אשר הכתה העיר בעצם  
היום הזה היתה עלי וריהו  
ויבא אותו שמה:

2. במראות אללים הביאני אל-  
ארץ ישראלי ויניחני אל-הר גבעה  
סאר ועליו קמבה-עיר מגניב:

3. ויבא אותו שמה והנה-איש  
מראהו כמראה נחתת ופתיל-

We will not presume to give a detailed commentary on these passages. We will merely attempt to set down some thoughts they engender, and even that only with the greatest circumspection. Especially when the Prophet deals with Jewish law, we have followed the interpretations of our Sages and Commentators and, in particular, those given by Rashi, even where these clearly pose problems. In many instances we will have to do without a complete explanation. Our reticence is justified by the comment of the Rambam: *בנן העיד להבנתו ע"פ שהוא כחוב ביחסאל אית מפורש וסביר (להלן ביתבחירה פ"א ה"ד)*. Hence, the writings of Ezekiel pertaining to the future Sanctuary are beyond our clear and detailed understanding.

*Verses 1-3.* **שם ציר**: There, in the distant west, lay the homeland of the Jewish people. The ordinary mortal eye could have seen the city only as ruins in an alien land. Not so Ezekiel; through the "Divine visions" (Verse 2) given him to behold, the Prophet was transported to "the Land of Israel." Israel has recovered its own land. Zion had been transformed into a "very high mountain;" it was "the Mountain of the House of God, established upon the summits of the mountains and borne by the hills" (Isaiah 2). Ezekiel is experiencing Isaiah's vision of **אתרי הרים**.

**כמבנה ציר**: The Prophet beholds also the City of God, exalted by "Divine visions." This is implicit in **כמבנה ציר**. The city was located to the south, some distance away from the Mountain of God (see Chapter 45). Nevertheless, it was **עליו**: it formed an integral part of Zion. Gone were the days when Zion, in tragic isolation from the rest of the nation, seemed doomed to a life of spiritual poverty.

The words **חכיא אוחז שמה** (Verse 3) take up the conclusion of Verse 1, amended by Verse 2.

linen cord in his hand and also measuring rod; he stood in the gate.

4. And the man said to me: Son of mankind, see with your eyes and listen with your ears and direct your earnest attention to everything that I will show you, for, in

**פְּשָׁתִים בָּרוּ וּקְנֵה הַמִּקְדָּשׁ וְהָא  
עֲמֹד בָּשְׁעָרָה:**

**וַיֹּרֶבֶר אֵלֵי הָאִישׁ בְּרוֹאָרִים  
רָאָה בְּעִינֵיכֶם וּבְאֹזְנֵיכֶם שְׁכֹעַ  
וּשְׂיִם לְבָקֶר לְכָל אֲשֶׁר-אָנוּ**

*Verse 3.* The Prophet sees before him an edifice which, as we will learn further on, is the Divine Sanctuary of the future. A man is waiting for him there, at the gate. It might not be too presumptuous to suggest that this man, whose appearance, according to Rashi, recalled to Ezekiel the revelations made to him when he first received the call to prophecy (see Chapter 43, Verse 3), was the same Divine messenger whom he had already encountered once before, at this same place, when he had to witness the tragic work of destruction at God's command (see Chapter 9). Now this messenger had appeared again, this time to guide the Prophet through the chambers of the rebuilt Sanctuary.

The "man clad in linen" (Chapter 9) had a linen cord in his hand.

This cord was used for longer measures; the measuring rod, for shorter ones (**מִפְרַשִׁים**). The measurements of the various parts of the building are given in painstaking detail as the messenger of God guides the Prophet through the Sanctuary. These measurements are given not only for the chambers of the Sanctuary itself but also, in singular detail, for the antechambers and their individual sections. In this edifice of the future not one single detail has been left to human discretion. It was totally a work of God, the place where God's will would be revealed, the will that every aspect of life, as symbolized by the antechambers surrounding the Sanctuary, must obey. For the Sanctuary is the abode of the Law of God that places its stamp upon every phase of human existence.

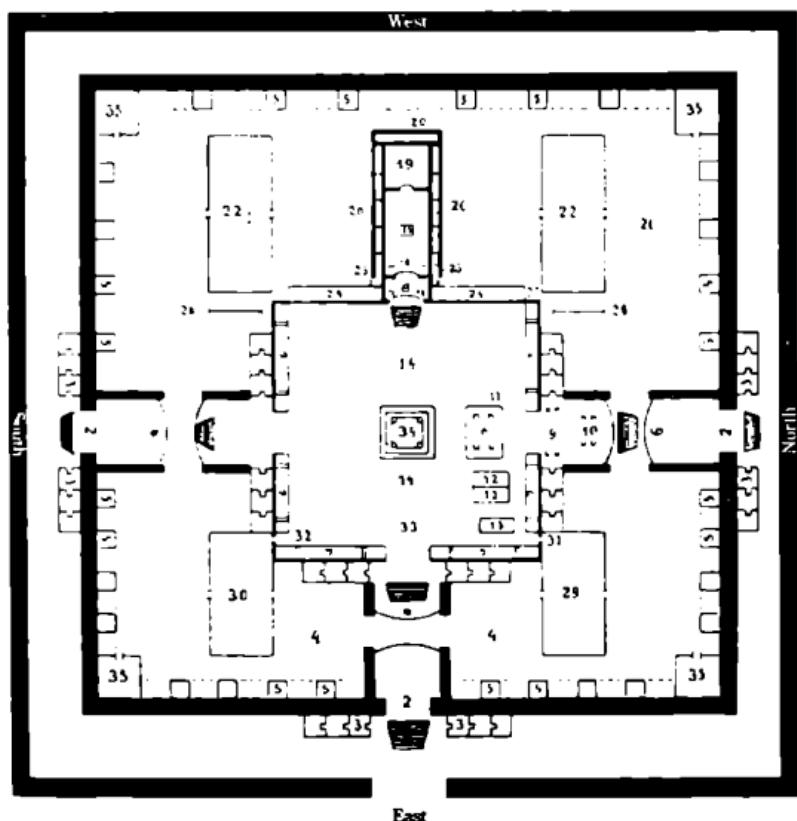
The fact that the dimensions of these structures are noted with such exacting care conveys one more message of the utmost importance: this edifice was not just a mirage such as might appear in the dreams of a nation bowed low by the sufferings of exile and badly in need of consolation. Every part of this building is ready and in place; its transformation into a glorious reality depends solely on the people that is now in exile.

*Verse 4.* Not only the eyes and ears of the Prophet, but his entire mind (see Chapter 44, Verse 5), must give close attention to that which is now being shown to him in the form of tangible realism. The purpose of this vision is to

order for you to see you have been brought here; explain everything that you will see to the house of Israel.

**מִרְאָה אֹתֶךָ כִּי לְמַעַן הַרְאֹתֶךָ  
הֲבָאתָה הַנֵּה הַנְּגֵן אַתְּכֶלֶל  
אֲשֶׁר-אַתָּה רָאָה לְכַיִת יִשְׂרָאֵל**

enable Ezekiel to give his exiled people a most detailed description of what he has beheld (בָּאָה), to make them aware of the high standards they must meet if they are to be worthy of the title "House of Israel" (see Chapter 43, Verse 10).



5. And behold, a wall outside the house, all around. In the man's hand there was a measuring rod of six cubits, of one cubit and one hand's breadth each. He measured the width of (this) building: one measuring rod; the height: one measuring rod.

6. He came to a gate which faced the east and he ascended its steps. He measured the doorpost of the gate: one measuring rod wide and (the other) doorpost: one measuring rod wide.

7. And the side chamber: one measuring rod in length and one measuring rod in width; [the space] between the chambers five cubits. The doorpost of the gate at the inner vestibule of the gate: one measuring rod.

ו. וְהִנֵּה חֻקָּה מְחוּזָן לְבֵית סְבִיבָה  
סְבִיבָה וּכְירָה הַאֲיָשׁ קָנָה הַמִּרְחָה  
שְׁשִׁיאָפוֹת בְּאֶפְמָה וּטְפָח וּמְבָרָךְ  
אַתְּלָחָב הַבְּנָנוֹ קָנָה אַחֲרָה וּקְוֹמָה  
קָנָה אַחֲרָה:

ו. וַיָּבֹא אֶל-שַׁעַר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו דָּרְךָ  
הַקְּרִיקָה וַיַּעַל בְּמַעַלְתוֹ וַיָּמָר  
אַתְּקָפָה הַשַּׁעַר קָנָה אַחֲרָה רַחֲבָה  
וְאַתְּסָפָה אַחֲרָה קָנָה אַחֲרָה רַחֲבָה:

ז. וְהַתְּאַקְנָה אַחֲרָה אַרְךָ וּקָנָה אַחֲרָה  
רַחֲבָה וּבֵין הַתְּאַמְּרִים חַמְשׁ אָמְלוֹת  
וּסְפָה הַשַּׁעַר מִאַצְלָ אֹולָם הַשַּׁעַר  
מִהְבִּית קָנָה אַחֲרָה:

בְּמַעַלְתוֹ כָּרוֹי.

*Verse 5.* חומת: The Sanctuary was surrounded on all sides by a wall [1].\* The length of the measuring rod was six cubits, with each cubit consisting of one standard cubit (i.e., five hands breadths), plus one additional hand's breadth, that is, a total of six hands breadths. Thus, the total length of the measuring rod was 36 hands breadths. The surrounding (outermost) wall (כִּינֵן) was six cubits wide and six cubits high.

*Verse 6.* From the east side he continued by way of the surrounding wall, then climbed 12 steps (see Rashi) and arrived at a gate [2] that led to the outer forecourt (עורות נשים). The doorposts were six cubits thick. (As a rule, סְפָה in Scripture denotes a threshold; here, according to Rashi, it has the measure of doorposts. The posts had the same width as the threshold.)

*Verse 7.* נָחָם, "chamber." On either side of this gate, slightly to the front, there were three chambers (see Verse 10). Each of these chambers was six cubits square. בָּנֵן הַחָמִים: The walls of these chambers were five cubits thick.

\* The numbers enclosed in square brackets refer to the numbers in the floor plan of the Sanctuary. This floor plan is largely based on the floor plan of שְׁלֹמֹה בָּנְיָה.

8. He measured the inner vestibule of the gate: one measuring rod.

9. He measured the vestibule of the gate: eight cubits; and its pillars: two cubits. The vestibule of the gate extended inward.

10. The chambers of the eastward gate: three on the one side, three on the other; one measure for all three. (Similarly) one measure for the pillars on the one side and on the other.

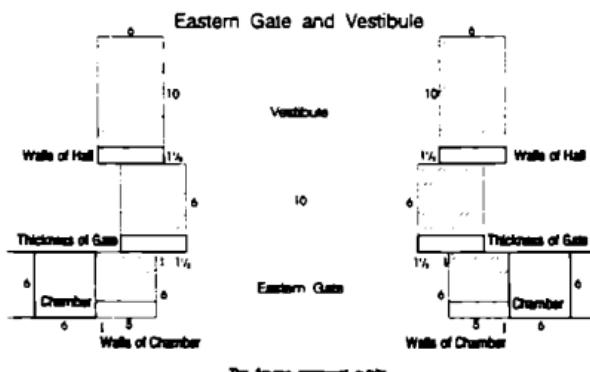
וְנִמְרֵאת־אֶלְםָה הַשַּׁעַר מִבְּבִזּוֹת  
קָנָה אַחֲרָה:

וְנִמְרֵאת־אֶלְםָה הַשַּׁעַר שְׁמַנְתָּה  
אַמּוֹת וְאַלְוָן שְׁתִים אַפּוֹת וְאֶלְםָה  
הַשַּׁעַר מִבְּבִזּוֹת:

וְתוֹאֵי הַשַּׁעַר בָּרוּךְ גָּדוֹלִים  
שְׁלִשָּׁה מִפְּהָה וּשְׁלִשָּׁה מִפְּהָה מִרְבָּה  
אַחֲת לְשִׁלְשָׁתָם וּמִפְּהָה אַחֲת  
לְאַלְוָן מִפְּהָה וּמִפְּהָה:  
אַלְוָן קָרִי.

**טו:** The gate led to a vestibule (toward the north). The posts of the gate on this side, too, were six cubits thick.

*Verse 8.* The meaning of this verse is that the thickness of the walls of the vestibule was six cubits.



*Verse 9.* יְמַסֵּד: The vestibule was eight cubits long. Adjoining the vestibule at the right and the left were pillars two cubits thick. (Rashi renders as "like a tree trunk," i.e., "round"). Thus, the total length of the vestibule was ten cubits (see floor plan).

*Verse 10.* אַלְמָה וּבָרָה: The text points out again that, in contrast to the vestibule of the gate leading to the north (Verse 31), this vestibule extended toward the interior.

*Verse 10.* Three chambers each [3] were located at either side of the east gate; see Verse 7.

לְאַלְוָן refers to Verse 9.

11. And he measured the width of the opening of the gate: ten cubits; the length of the (vestibule) gate: thirteen cubits.

12. (There was) an empty space of one cubit in front of the chambers; a space of one cubit on one side, so that the chamber was (located) at the distance of six cubits on one side and (similarly) at the distance of six cubits on the other side.

13. And he measured the gate from the roof of the (one) chamber to the roof (of the opposite chamber): a width of twenty-five cubits. One door was facing (the other) door.

ו. וַיִּמְרֵא אֶת-לְחָבֶד פֶּתַח-הַשַּׁעַר עַשְׂרֶה אַמּוֹת אֶלְךָ הַשַּׁעַר שְׁלֹשׁ עַשְׂרֶה אַמּוֹת:

ז. וְנַבְול לְפָנֵי הַתְּאָוֹת אַמְתָה אַחַת וְאַמְתָה-אַתָּת נַבְול מִסְתָּה וְהַתָּא שְׁשָׁ-אַמּוֹת מִפּוֹ וְשָׁשָׁ אַמּוֹת מִפּוֹ:

ט. וַיִּמְרֵא אֶת-הַשַּׁעַר מִבַּגְנָה הַתָּא לְגַנוּ רַחֲבָה עַשְׂרִים וּחֲמָשָׁ אַמּוֹת פֶּתַח גָּנָר פֶּתַח:

*Verse 11.* **אֶלְךָ** in this case refers to the width of the gate leading to the vestibule. Here, the width is referred to as "the length" because, measuring 13 cubits, it was greater than the length of the vestibule which, even together with the pillars extending at the front, totaled only ten cubits. Since the opening of the vestibule (13 cubits) was wider than the opening of the gate (10 cubits), the walls of the vestibule were set back one and one-half cubits on either side of the gate walls.

*Verse 12.* Rashi renders **נַבְול** as "an open space." As measured from the vestibule walls, the chambers, which were set to the front of the gate, were set back one cubit on either side.

**וְהַתָּא שָׁשָׁ אַמּוֹת:** Thus, since its walls were five cubits thick (see Verse 7), the first chamber (on either side) was situated six cubits to the side from the beginning of the vestibule wall, or seven and one-half cubits to the side from the gate.

*Verse 13.* Thus, the total width of the gate, measured from the roof of the first chamber at the north to the roof of the first chamber at the south, was 25 cubits. The walls of the chamber on either side were five cubits thick, accounting for a total of 10 cubits. Two and one-half cubits of open space on either side accounted for an additional five cubits. The actual width of the gate was ten cubits. Total: 25 cubits (see floor plan).

**מִנוּ:** The exit of each chamber was built into the wall facing the entrance; thus, the exits in each case were directly opposite the entrances. These exits

14. He constructed the pillars (to a height of) sixty cubits; this applied to (all) the pillars of the forecourt at the gates that were round about.

15. At the front of the entrance gate as well as at the front of the vestibule of the gate which lay toward the inside (he measured) fifty cubits.

16. The chambers had windows that narrowed (toward the inside); they were at the pillars of the doors that surrounded the inside of the gate. This also applied to the vestibules; windows also faced

14. וַיַּעֲשֶׂה אֹתֶת־אֱלֹהִים שְׁשָׁים אַמָּה  
וְאֶל־אֵילָן הַחֶצֶר הַשְׁעַר סְכִיב |  
סְכִיב:

15. וְנִלְתַּנְלֵן פָּנֵי הַשְׁעַר הַיְאָתָון עַל־  
לִפְנֵי אַלְמָם הַשְׁעַר הַפְּנִימִית חֲמִשִּׁים  
אַמָּה:

16. וְחַלּוּנוֹת אַטְמָכוֹת אֶל־הַתְּאָרִים  
וְאֶל אַלְיהָפוֹה לִפְנִימָה לְשַׁעַר  
סְכִיב | סְכִיב וְגַן לְאַלְמָמוֹת  
הַיְאָתָון קָרֵי.

were the only doors leading from the chambers directly to the outside. The chambers were linked to one another by connecting doors.

*Verse 14.* refers to the height of the pillars adjoining the vestibule walls (Verse 9): *הַשְׁעַר סְכִיב סְכִיב*: As at the east, there were identical gateways leading to vestibules also at the north and at the south.

*Verse 15.* *וְיִ*: The frontal height of the entrance (*אֲמֹת אִיתָן* from *אִיתָן*, "to come") and the adjoining vestibule was ten cubits less than the height of the pillars at the end of the vestibule [14].

*Verse 16.* *סְכִיב*: "sealed." The windows were wide toward the outside, and narrowing toward the inside, to teach us that the Sanctuary was not in need of light from the outside. "The function of the windows was not to conduct [physical] light into the inner space. Rather, these rooms enclosed the place from which [spiritual] light was to spread forth to all mankind" (Mendel Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, ); see Rashi on Verse 24.

*וְאֶל אַלְיהָפוֹה*: The windows were placed near the pillars of the chamber doors, which were situated to the inside of the gate (Verse 13). *סְכִיב סְכִיב*: So, too, it was with the chambers at the northern and southern gates. *וְגַן לְאַלְמָמוֹת* (singular, *אַלְמָם*): Windows were placed also in all the vestibules adjoining the gates. *מִלְלָנוֹת*: Each chamber had windows also in the wall facing the inside of the forecourt (*שְׂדָה נְשִׁים*).

*חַמְרִים*: The pillars were topped with palm branch ornaments. These *חַמְרִים* are mentioned again in a later chapter (Chapter 41, Verse 18). These ornaments, too, were probably meant to convey a clear symbolic message; i.e., Israel is

inside, all around. The pillars had decorations (in the form) of palm trees.

**17.** He led me into the outer courtyard and, behold, there were chambers and a pavement made for the forecourt all around; thirty chambers (were) on the pavement.

**18.** The pavement was on (both) sides of the gate; the length of the top of the gates corresponded to the lower position of the pavement.

**19.** He measured the width (of the forecourt) from the front of the lower gate to the outside front of the inner forecourt, one hundred cubits eastward and northward.

**20.** And the gate that faced northward at the outer courtyard he measured according to its length and width.

**21.** And its chambers were three

וְחַלּוֹנוֹת סָבִיב | סָבִיב לְפִנִּים  
וְאֶל-אֵיל תְּמָרִים:

וַיַּבְאֵנִי אֶל-הַחֶזֶר הַחַצּוֹנָה  
וְהַגָּה לְשֻׁכּוֹת וּרְצָפָה עֲשָׂוִי לְחֶזֶר  
סָבִיב | סָבִיב שְׁלֹשִׁים לְשֻׁכּוֹת אֶל-  
הַרְצָפָה:

וּרְצָפָה אֶל-כֶּתֶף הַשּׁעֲרִים  
לְעַמֶּת אָרָךְ הַשּׁעֲרִים הַרְצָפָה  
הַתְּחִתּוֹנָה:

וַיִּמְرֵד רַחֵב מִלְּפָנֵי הַשּׁעֲרִים  
הַתְּחִתּוֹנָה לְפִנֵּי הַחֶזֶר הַפְּנִימִי  
מִחוֹזָן מֵאָה אַפְּנָה הַקְּרִים וּהַאֲסָפָן:

וְהַשּׁעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו בְּרוּךְ הַצְּפָן  
לְחֶזֶר הַחַצּוֹנָה קָמָר אָרְכוֹן דְּחָבוֹן:

וְתָאָו שְׁלוֹשָׁה מִפְּוָדָה וְשְׁלֹשָׁה  
וְתָאָו כָּרִי.

expected to "obey Me, to stand guard zealously at My gates day after day, and to keep watch at the posts of My doors" (Proverbs 8,34). See Chapter 43, Verse 11 and Chapter 46, Verses 1-3.

*Verses 17-18.* The Prophet walked through the gate into the outer forecourt [4]. Adjoining the wall were chambers [5] with flagstone floors. These floors extended from either side of the gates. Rashi in this instance interprets אָרָךְ הַשּׁעֲרִים as the height of the gates. This would mean that the flagstone floors rested on balconies attached to the inside of the wall at the level of the gates.

*Verse 19.* The outer forecourt (צָרוֹת נְשִׁים), measured from the front of the gate described above to the front of the inner forecourt (צָרוֹת אֲנָשִׁים), took up an area of 100 cubits by 100 cubits. *The körösim ha-zemach:* The measurements of the north side were the same as those of the east side (see Verse 23).

*Verses 20-22.* At the north side the Prophet came upon a gate that corresponded to the east gate in every detail.

*Verse 21.* חַמְסִים אַפְּה: see Verse 15.

on the one side and three on the other; its pillars and its vestibule had the same measurements as the first (eastern) gate: fifty cubits its height and twenty-five cubits its width.

22. Its windows, its vestibule and palm-tree decorations were according to the measurement of the gate facing east; it was ascended by seven steps: the vestibule was located in front of them.

23. The inner forecourt had a gate facing the (outer) gate, in the north as well as in the east; he measured from one gate to the other, one hundred cubits.

24. He led me to the south side; there was a gate toward the south; he measured its pillars and its vestibule, the same measurements (as above).

25. It had windows and also its vestibule on all sides like those windows (as mentioned above), fifty cubits its height and twenty-five cubits its width.

מִפְנֵי וְאַיָּלוֹ וְאַלְפָטוֹ הַנֶּה בְּמִרְתָּה  
הַשְׁעָר הַרְאָשׁוֹן חַמְשִׁים אַמָּה  
אֲרָכוֹ וְרָחָב חַמְשׁוֹ שְׁעִשְׁרִים  
בְּאַפְּהָ:

22. וְחַלְנוֹן וְאַלְפָטוֹ וְתִמְרָה בְּמִרְתָּה  
הַשְׁעָר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו בְּרֵךְ הַקְּרִים  
וּבְמַצְלֹות שְׁבֻעָה נְעַלְדָּבוֹ וְאַיָּלוֹ  
לְפִנֵּיהֶם:

23. וְשָׁעָר לְחַצֵּר הַפְּנִימִי גָּנָד  
הַשְׁעָר לְאַפְּהָוֹן וְלְקָרִים וּוּמָר מִשְׁעָר  
אַלְשָׁעָר מִאָה אַפְּהָ:

24. וַיְלַכְּבַּנִּי בְּرֵךְ הַרְרוֹם וְתִגְּדָה  
שָׁעָר בְּרֵךְ הַרְרוֹם וּמִבְּרֵךְ אַיָּלוֹ  
וְאַלְפָטוֹ בְּמִדְרוֹת הַאֲלָהָה:

25. וְחַלְנוֹנִים לוֹ וְלְאַלְפָטוֹ סְכִיבָה  
סְכִיב בְּחַלְנוֹנִות הַגְּדוֹלָה חַמְשִׁים  
אַפְּהָ אֲרָךְ וְרָחָב חַמְשׁוֹ שְׁעִשְׁרִים  
אַפְּהָ:

וְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי. וְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי. וְחַלְנוֹנִי קָרִי.  
וְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי. וְטִסְרִי קָרִי. וְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי.  
וְיִלְוֹוֹ קָרִי. וְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי. לְאַלְפָטוֹ קָרִי.

*Verse 22. לְמִזְרָחָם:* Viewed from where Ezekiel was standing in the forecourt [17], the vestibule was situated in front of the steps, but in reality the steps led through the gate into the vestibule which, in turn, led to the forecourt.

*Verse 23.* Across from the north and south gates of the outer forecourt there were gates that led to the inner forecourt. On the north side, too, the width of the forecourt (see Verse 19) was 100 cubits.

*Verse 24 ff.* The Prophet noted that the south side was identical with the north and east sides in every detail.

*Verse 25.* The chambers, i.e., the chambers, and the walls of the vestibule; see Verse 16.

**26.** Seven steps formed its ascent, its vestibule in front of them. It had palm tree [decorations] on its pillars, one on one side and one on the other.

**27.** And the inner forecourt had a gate facing southward; it measured from the one gate to the other gate, southward one hundred cubits.

**28.** He led me to the inner forecourt through the south gate, and he measured the south gate like the (above) measurements.

**29.** Its chambers and its pillars and its vestibule had these (same) measurements and there were windows and also its vestibule on all sides; fifty cubits its height, twenty-five cubits its width.

**30.** And there were halls round about; the length twenty-five cubits, the width five cubits.

**31.** Its vestibule adjoined the outer forecourt, and palm-tree

26. וּמִעְלֹות שֶׁבַע עַלְוֹתָו וְאַלְפּוֹ  
לְפִנֵּים וּתְמִרְאִים לוֹ אֶחָד מִפְּנֵי  
וְאֶחָד מִפְּנֵי אֶלְעָלָה:

27. וְשַׁעַר לְחֶצֶר הַפְּנִימִי בְּרוּךְ  
הַרְרוּם וְיָמָר מִשְׁעָר אֶלְהָשָׁעַר  
בְּרוּךְ הַרְרוּם מֵאָה אַמּוֹת:

28. וַיְבִיאֵנִי אֶלְחֶצֶר הַפְּנִימִי  
בְּשַׁעַר הַרְרוּם וְיָמָר אֶת־הַשָּׁעַר  
הַרְרוּם בְּמִדּוֹת הַאֲלָהָה:

29. וְתָאָו וְאַילּוֹ וְאַלְפּוֹ בְּמִדּוֹת  
הַאֲלָהָה וְחַלּוּגּוֹת לוֹ וְלְאַלְפּוֹ סְכִיבָּה  
סְכִיבָּה חַמְשִׁים אַמָּה אָרֶךְ וּרְחֵבָה  
עָשָׂרִים וְחַמְשָׁ אַמּוֹת:

30. וְאַלְמֹתָה סְכִיבָּה | סְכִיבָּה אָרֶךְ  
חַמְשָׁ וְעִשְׂרִים אַמָּה וּרְחֵבָה חַמְשָׁ  
אַמּוֹת:

וְ. וְאַלְפּוֹ אֶלְחֶצֶר הַחֲצֹנָה  
עַלְתוֹן קָרִי. וְאַלְמוֹן קָרִי. אַיְלוֹן קָרִי.  
וְתָאָו קָרִי. וְאַילּוֹן קָרִי. וְאַלְמוֹן קָרִי.  
וְאַלְמוֹן קָרִי. וְאַלְמוֹן קָרִי.

*Verse 26.* Here, too, the pillars that flanked the walls of the vestibule on either side were ornamented with palm tree motifs.

*Verse 27.* See Verse 23.

*Verses 28–29.* The Prophet now stood in the southern part of the outer forecourt (פּוֹרָחָה נְשִׁים). From there he proceeded to the inner forecourt (פּוֹרָחָה אֲנָשִׁים) through a gate that was identical in structure and measurements with the outer gate (הַאֲלָהָה) [6].

*Verse 30.* Vestibules extended along the inside wall of the inner forecourt סְכִיבָּה at the east, south and north sides [7].

*Verse 31.* Coming from the outer forecourt, one passed over a flight of

[decorations] were on its pillars; eight steps formed its ascent.

**32.** He led me to the inner forecourt toward the east and he measured the gate with the (same) measurements.

**33.** Its chambers and its pillars and its vestibule had the same measurements (as above); and it had windows and its vestibule on all sides; fifty cubits its height, twenty-five cubits its width.

**34.** Its vestibule was toward the outer forecourt, and palm-tree [decorations] on its pillars on the one side and the other; eight steps formed its ascent.

**35.** He led me to the northern gate and measured the same measurements (as above).

**36.** Its chambers, its pillars and its vestibule—and it had windows on all sides; fifty cubits its height, twenty-five cubits its width.

וְתָמִרִים אֶל־אַיִלּוֹ וּמְעֻלּוֹת  
שֶׁמְנוּה מֵעַלְוָה:

**32.** וַיַּבְיאֵנִי אֶל־הַחֲצֵר הַפְנִימִי  
בְּרוּךְ הַקָּרִים וַיִּמְרֶא אֶת־הַשַּׁעַר  
בְּמִרְוֹת הָאֱלָהָה:

**33.** וְתָאָו וְאַלְעַזְוּ וְאַלְפּוּ בְּמִרְוֹת  
הָאֱלָהָה וְתָלְגּוּתָה לְוַלְאַלְפּוּ סְכִיבָה  
סְכִיבָה אַרְךְ חַמְשִׁים אַפְּהָ וּרְחָבָב  
חַמְשָׁ שְׁעָשָׂרִים אַפְּהָ:

**34.** וְאַלְפּוּ לְחַצְרָה הַקְוִיצוֹנָה  
וְתָמִרִים אֶל־אַלְמָנוֹתָמוֹתָו שְׁמָנָה  
מְעֻלּוֹת מֵעַלְוָה:

**35.** וַיַּבְיאֵנִי אֶל־שַׁעַר הַצְּפֹן וּטְבֻרָה  
בְּמִרְוֹת הָאֱלָהָה:

**36.** תָּאָו אַלְעַזְוּ וְאַלְפּוּ וְתָלְגּוּתָה לְוַ  
סְכִיבָה | סְכִיבָה אַרְךְ חַמְשִׁים אַפְּהָ  
וּרְחָבָב חַמְשָׁ שְׁעָשָׂרִים אַפְּהָ:

אַלְיוֹן קָרִי. מְעַלְוָיָה קָרִי. תָּאָוָיָה קָרִי.  
וְאַלְפּוֹיָה קָרִי. לְאַלְפּוֹיָה קָרִי. וְאַלְפּוֹיָה קָרִי.  
אַלְיוֹיָה קָרִי. מְעַלְוָיָה קָרִי. תָּאָוָיָה קָרִי. אַלְיוֹיָה  
וְאַלְפּוֹיָה קָרִי.

steps, through the gate leading into the vestibule adjoining from within; the steps led to the vestibule that led to the gate. These eight steps, together with the seven steps of the front gate (Verse 22), comprised the 15 steps that led to the north gate. Thus, the vestibules of the two gates faced one another.

*Verse 32.* Ascending the steps of the inner gate at the south (31), the Prophet re-entered the outer forecourt from where he was led toward the inner gate at the east. He noted that here, too, the layout was identical with that of the north side [35–37].

*Verses 36–37.* A cursory look (as indicated by his terse, allusive description) was sufficient for the Prophet to note that here, again, the layout was the same.

37. Its pillars were toward the outer forecourt, and palm-tree [decorations] on its pillars on the one side and the other; eight steps formed its ascent.

38. A chamber (was there) whose entrance was near the pillars of the gate; there the elevating offering was to be rinsed.

39. In the vestibule of the gate there were two tables on the one side and two tables on the other, for slaughtering on them the elevating offering, the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, and the guilt offering.

40. On the side-wall outside (the vestibule), as one ascended to the entrance of the northern gate, there were two tables and likewise two tables on the other side-wall of the vestibule of the gate.

41. Four tables on the one side and four tables on the other side,

37. וְאַיִלּוֹ לְחֶצֶר הַתִּיצְוָה וְתִמְרִים אֶל-אַיִלּוֹ מִפְּוָז וּמִפְּוָז וְשָׁמְנָה מִעֲלוֹת מִעַלְוָה:

38. וְלִשְׁכָה וּפְתַחַת בְּאַיִלּוֹם הַשְׁעָרִים שֵׁם וְרִיחוֹ אֶת-הַעֲלָה:

39. וּבְאַלְמָם הַשְׁעָר שְׁנִים שְׁלַחְנוֹת מִפְּזָז וּשְׁגָנִים שְׁלַחְנוֹת מִפְּהָלָשָׁת אֶל-יְהִים הַעֲלָה וְהַחֲטֹאת וְהַאֲשָׁם:

40. וְאֶל-הַקְּתֻף מִחוֹזָה לְעֹלָה לְפָתָח הַשְׁעָר הַצּוֹנָה שְׁנִים שְׁלַחְנוֹת וְאֶל-הַקְּתֻף הַאַחֲרַת אֲשֶׁר לְאַלְמָם הַשְׁעָר שְׁנִים שְׁלַחְנוֹת:

41. אֶרְכָּעָה שְׁלַחְנוֹת מִפְּהָלָשָׁת אֶרְכָּעָה שְׁלַחְנוֹת מִפְּהָלָשָׁת נְאַיִלּוֹ קָרֵי. אַיִלּוֹ קָרֵי. טָלְיוֹ קָרֵי.

*Verse 37.* וְאַיִלּוֹ refers to the pillars of the vestibule with the palm tree motif; here, too, the vestibule led to the outer forecourt.

*Verse 38.* In the *עֹורָה* (between the altar and the north gate) there was a chamber [8] whose entrance faced the pillars of the two (outer and inner) north gates. This chamber was the place where the entrails of the animal offerings were to be rinsed (מִלְא, “to wash off,” or “to rinse”).

*Verses 39–41.* In the vestibule of the north gate, on either side of the gate, stood two tables [9] (Verse 39). Another two tables on each side stood against the lateral walls of the gate [10]. Thus, there were four tables on either side of the gate, giving a total of eight tables. These were the tables near which the animal offerings that, according to the Torah, were to be slaughtered at the north side (*בְּצִדְקוֹן*) of the altar.

by the side-wall of the gate; eight tables at which one slaughtered.

**42.** Four tables for the elevating offering were of hewn stones, their length one-and-a-half cubits, their width one-and-a-half cubits, the height one cubit; on them were placed the utensils with which were slaughtered the elevating offering and the meal offering.

**43.** And hooks, one hand's breadth [long] were fastened on the inside, all round; on the tables the flesh of the offerings (was to be placed).

**44.** Outside of the inner gate were the chambers of the singers in the inner forecourt; they were at the side of the northern gate, and their front was to the south. One (chamber) was near the side of the eastern gate, its front facing north.

**45.** He said to me: This chamber whose front faces south, is set

הַשָּׁעַר שְׂמֹונָה שְׁלַחְנוֹת אֲלֵיכֶם  
וִשְׁחַטְתֶּם:

**42.** וְאַרְכְּבָה שְׁלַחְנוֹת לְעֹלָה אֲכַנֵּן  
בְּזִוְת אֶרְךְ אַפְתָּה אֶחָתָה וְחַצִּי וּרְחַבְבָּה  
אַפְתָּה אֶחָתָה וְחַצִּי וּבְנָה אַפְתָּה אֶחָתָה  
אֲלֵיכֶם וַיַּעֲשׂו אֶת־הַפְּלִילִים אֲשֶׁר  
יִשְׁחַטְתִּי אֶת־הַעֲלָה בָם וְהַצְבָתָה:

**43.** וְהַשְּׁפְתִים טְפֵח אַחֲר מְזֻכְנִים  
בְּבִوتִ סְכִיב אַסְכִיב וְאַל־הַשְּׁלַחְנוֹת  
בְּשַׂר הַקְרָבָה:

**44.** וּמְחוֹצָה לְשַׁעַר הַפְּנִימִי  
לְשֻׁכּוֹת שָׁרוֹים בְּחַצֵּר הַפְּנִימִי  
אֲשֶׁר אַל־כְּתָף שַׁעַר הַצְפּוֹן  
וּפְנִיהם בְּרִיךְ הַקְרָבָה אַחֲר אַל־  
כְּתָף שַׁעַר הַקְרָבָה פָנֵיו בְּרִיךְ הַצְפּוֹן:  
**45.** וַיַּרְכֵּב אֵלֵי זוֹה הַלְשָׁבָה אֲשֶׁר

*Verse 42.* לְעַלָּה: The four tables [11] cited in this verse were probably in the chamber described in Verse 38. On these tables the ascent offerings were washed and the knives for the slaughter of these offerings were placed.

*Verse 43.* In this chamber there were also hooks on which the slaughtered animals were hung for skinning and then placed on the tables in this chamber.

At this point the Prophet's description becomes more detailed. This is understandable if we recall the corruption the Prophet had once beheld precisely at the north side of the Temple (see our commentary on Chapter 8, Verse 3). Significantly, it was from this same side of the restored Temple that his people would one day seek to come nearer to God again and pledge their devotion to Him.

*Verse 44.* לְשֻׁכּוֹת אַחֲר [12].

*Verse 45.* Of these two chambers, which were reserved for the members of

aside for the priests, the keepers of the charge of the House.

**46.** But the chamber whose front faces north is set aside for the priests who are to keep the charge of the altar; these are the sons of Zadok who, from among the sons of Levi, are to come near to God to serve Him.

**47.** He measured the forecourt, one hundred cubits the length and one hundred cubits the width, four square. The altar stood in front of the House.

**48.** He led me into the vestibule of the House and measured the pillar of the vestibule, five cubits on the one side and five cubits on the other; the width of the gate was three cubits on the one side and three cubits on the other.

**49.** The length of the vestibule was twenty cubits and eleven cubits the width, and one ascended to it by steps. There were columns

פֶּנִּיתְךָ רַקֵּד הַקְרָרָם לְכָבָנִים שָׁמְרוּ  
מִשְׁמָרַת הַבַּיִת:

46. וְתַלְשֵׁבָה אֲשֶׁר פֶּנִּיתְךָ רַקֵּד  
פָּצֹפָן לְכָבָנִים שָׁמְרוּ מִשְׁמָרַת  
הַפְּנִיגָּח תְּמָה בְּנֵי־צָרוֹק הַקְרָרָם  
מִבְּנֵי־לְנֵי אֱלֹהָה לְשָׂרָתוֹ:

47. וְנַסְמֵד אֶת־הַחָצֵר אַרְךְ | מִאֵה  
אַפְּהָ וּרְחָבָב מִאֵה אַפְּהָ מִרְבָּעָת  
וְהַמּוֹבֵחַ לְפָנֵי הַבַּיִת:

48. וַיַּכְאֵנִי אֶל־אַלְמָם הַבַּיִת וַיָּמֹר  
אֶל־אַלְמָם חִמְשׁ אַמּוֹת מִפְּהָ וּחַמְּשׁ  
אַמּוֹת מִפְּהָ וּרְחָבָב הַשְׁעָר שְׁלִשִׁים  
אַמּוֹת מִפְּהָ וּשְׁלִשִׁים אַמּוֹת מִפְּהָ:

49. אַרְךְ הַאַלְמָם עֲשָׂרִים אַפְּהָ  
וּרְחָבָב עֲשֵׂתִי עֲשָׂרָה אַפְּהָ  
וּבְמַעְלוֹת אֲשֶׁר יַעֲלוּ אַלְמָנוֹ

the Levite choir [44], one was apparently set aside for use by the priests who, in future, would be assigned only certain subordinate Levite services because they had not kept away from heathen corruption and had therefore lost the prerogatives of priesthood. שָׁרוֹת מִשְׁרָחָה הַבַּיִת, see Chapter 44, Verses 10–11.

*Verse 46.* See Chapter 44, Verse 15 ff.

*Verse 47.* המִזְבֵּחַ (עֲרוֹת אֲנָשִׁים) in front of the entrance to the הַכִּיל.

*Verse 48.* אַלְמָם: the vestibule leading to the הַיּוֹכֵל [15]. The length of the hall (from north to south), measuring 20 cubits [49], had walls on the left and right sides that narrowed the entrance [16]. They are referred to as "pillars" in terms of their thickness (five cubits) and as "gates" in terms of their width (five cubits). Thus, the width of the entrance to the vestibule was 16 cubits.

*Verse 49.* וּרְחָבָב: from the east to the west, 12 steps (see Rashi).

near the pillars, one on the one side and one on the other.

**Chap. 41.** 1. He led me to the *Heichal* and measured the pillars: six cubits the width on the one side and six cubits the width on the other, the width of the roofing.

2. The width of the entrance was ten cubits: the side-walls of the entrance were five cubits on the one side and five cubits on the other. He measured its length as forty cubits; its width, twenty cubits.

3. He came to the inner room and measured the pillars of the entrance: two cubits (each); the entrance was six cubits (high) and the width of the entrance seven cubits.

עַמְדִים אֶל־הַאֲילִים אֶתְרַמְּפָה  
וְאֶתְרַמְּפָה:

מְאָה וָיְבָאָנִי אֶל־הַיְכָל וַיָּמַר  
אֶת־הַאֲילִים שְׁשִׁ אַמּוֹת רַחֲבָה  
מִפְּנֵי וְשִׁשְׁ אַמּוֹת־רַחֲבָה מִפְּנֵי רַחֲבָה  
הַאֲתָל:

וְרַחֲבָה הַפְּתַח עַשֶּׂר אַמּוֹת  
וּכְתֻפּוֹת הַפְּתַח חֲמִשׁ אַמּוֹת מִפְּנֵי  
חֲמִשׁ אַמּוֹת מִפְּנֵי וַיָּמַר אֶרְכָו  
אַרְכָעִים אַפְּהָ וְרַחֲבָה עַשְׂרִים  
אַמּוֹת:

וְכֹא לְפָנִימָה וַיָּמַר אֵיל־הַפְּתַח  
שְׁתִים אַמּוֹת וְהַפְּתַח שְׁשִׁ אַמּוֹת  
וְרַחֲבָה הַפְּתַח שְׁבַע אַמּוֹת:

pillars corresponding to the brass columns, Yachin and Boaz, of the first Temple (see I Kings, 7,15 ff.)

**Chapter 41, Verse 1.** הַאֲילִים: the pillars, meaning the walls [17] that divide the *הַיכָּל* [18] from the vestibule on either side of the entrance (2). The width, i.e., the thickness of these pillars was six cubits. This was also the width of the "roofing;" i.e., the upper threshold, which is aptly designated here as *הַאֲתָל* because there were doors on both the inner and outer sides (Verse 24) which completely closed off the area formed by the lateral walls and the upper threshold (cf. Malbim).

**Verse 2.** Since the width (from north to south) of the *הַיכָּל* [18] was 20 cubits, and the lateral walls on either side of the entrance were five cubits each in width, the width of the entrance itself was ten cubits.

**Verse 3.** The Divine messenger now moved into the western inner court. But the Prophet could not follow him there; this was the קְדֻשָּׁה הקְרֻשָּׁה (Verse 4) [19]. Rashi renders *מִתְּחָת* as "the height of the entrance."

4. He measured its length as twenty cubits; the width as twenty cubits, facing the *Heichal*, and he said to me: This is the Holy of Holies.

5. He measured the wall of the House as six cubits and the width of (each) side chamber as four cubits on the sides of the House, round about.

6. As to the side chambers, thirty-three times, chamber upon chamber; they leaned on the wall of the House which faced the chambers round about, to be imbedded—yet without being (fully) imbedded in the wall of the House.

ו. זינcker את־ארכו עשרים אמה  
ווחב עשרים אמה אל־פנין  
ההיכל ויאמר אליו זה קרש  
הקרשים:

ז. זינcker קור־הבית שש אמות  
ווחב האלע ארבע אמות סכיב  
סכיב לבית סכיב:

ח. זה אלעות צלע אל־צלע שלוש  
ושלשים פעמים ובאות בקירות  
אשר־לבית לאלוות סכיב אסכיב  
להיות אחוזים ולא־יהו אחוזים  
בקיר הבית:

*Verse 4.* אל פנ: The width of the קדשים was the same as that of the House.—קדשים is “a source of sanctity for all else which is sacred;” the sanctity to which the Ark symbolically summons us is the precondition for the sanctification of the שולחן and the מנורה (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 29,37).

*Verse 5.* The entire thickness of the walls of the היכל together with the wall of the Holy of Holies was six cubits. The northern and southern sides of these chambers, as well as the west side of the Holy of Holies, were flanked by side chambers [20].

*Verse 6.* The side chambers were arranged on three levels. On the west side there were three chambers one above the other; on the north and the south sides there were fifteen chambers on each side, with five chambers on each level, giving a total of 33 chambers.

ובאות: The chambers adjoined the wall; their girders rested on the wall facing the chambers. These girders were resting against the wall but were not imbedded in it. As in the Temple of Solomon (I Kings 6,5) the girders were not anchored in the wall; rather, the wall was set back one cubit at each level, its thickness tapering off to allow the girders of the chambers to rest on the resulting projection. As a consequence, the chambers of each level were wider than those on the levels below; see *Verse 7*.

7. The chambers had an extension and a spiral staircase which led higher and higher; for the (chambers) surrounding the House ascended higher and higher, all around the House; therefore they became wider and wider at the House as one ascended; and so the lower floor led to the upper floor through the middle [floor].

8. I saw the height of the House on every side. The foundations of the chambers [were] a full measuring rod (thick): six cubits (measured) to the joint.

9. The width of the wall toward the outside chambers was five cubits. (The same measurement applied) to the open space at the chamber complex of the House.

ז. וְרֹחֶבֶת וְנִסְכָּה לְמַעַלָּה לְמַעַלָּה  
לְאֶלְעָוֹת כִּי מִסְכָּנִים בֵּית לְמַעַלָּה  
לְמַעַלָּה סְכִיב | סְכִיב לְבֵית  
עַל־בָּן רְחַכְלָבָית לְמַעַלָּה וּבָנָן  
הַתְּחִתּוֹנָה וְעַלָּה עַל־הַעֲלָיוֹנָה:  
לְתִיכְוֹנָה:

8. וְרָאִיתִי לְבֵית נִבְהָ סְכִיב | סְכִיב  
מִסְפְּרוֹת הָאֶלְעָוֹת מְלֹא הַקָּנָה שָׁשׁ  
אַמְּוֹת אֲצִילָה:

9. לְחַבֵּב הַקִּיר אֲשֶׁר־לְאֶלְעָוֹת אֶל־  
הַחַזֵּין חַכְשׁ אַמְּוֹת וְאֲשֶׁר כַּנְגָּה  
בָּיּוֹת אֶלְעָוֹת אֲשֶׁר לְבֵית:  
פָּסּוּרוֹת קָרִין.

*Verse 7.* is clarified by and כי מוסף הבית ונור ורחבת chambers were connected by a spiral staircase leading from the lower to the upper level as explained by the concluding portion of this verse (ובן החthonona) However, (see תסבָה מִצְדָּחָה רֹד) can also denote a stairwell that ran parallel to both sides (north and south) "until the top." (See Verse 12). This would mean that, in addition, there was a staircase linking the chambers of each level from the inside.

*Verse 8.* Since the Prophet could see, from where he stood, the chambers that surrounded the edifice, he was able to judge the total height of the edifice from the height of the individual levels.

The walls of the chambers rested on foundations six cubits thick. The connotation of אֲצִילָה is not clear; אֲצִילָה may denote a large cubit "measured up to the wrist" (?); cf. אֲצִיל in Chapter 13, Verse 8.

*Verse 9.* The thickness of the foundations was six cubits; the width of the outer walls of the chambers was five cubits. This was also the width of אֲשֶׁר מִתְּהִלָּה, or, as it is described in Verse 11, the פָּקוּם הַמְּתָה, the "area that was left open." In other words, the "house of chambers," i.e., the chambers that ran along the length of the יְכֵל from the north to the south, ended in such a manner as to create yet another open area on either side (on the southeast and northeast corners) [21].

**10.** And the space between the chambers was twenty cubits wide all around the House on each side.

**11.** The door of the chambers was toward the open space: one door toward the north, one door toward the south. The width of the open space was five cubits round about.

**12.** The structure that ran along the main building to the west had a (total) width of seventy cubits; the wall of the structure was five cubits wide on every side; its length was ninety cubits.

**13.** He measured the House: one hundred cubits long; the main building and the structure with its walls being one hundred cubits long.

10. וּבֵין הַלְשׁוֹכֹת רֶחֶב עֲשָׂרִים

אַפְּהָה סְכִיב לְבִית סְכִיב | סְכִיב:

וּפְתַח הַצְלָע לְמִנְחָה פָּתַח אַחֲרָה

בְּרוּךְ הַצְפּוֹן וּפְתַח אַחֲרָה לְדָרוֹם

וּרְחֶבֶב טְקוּם כְּמִנְחָה קְמִשָּׁה אַמְתָה

סְכִיב | סְכִיב:

12. וְהַבְנֵן אֲשֶׁר אַל-פָּנֵי הַגּוֹרָה

פָּאָתָה דָּרְךָ הַנְּסָמֶךָ שְׁבָעִים אַפְּהָה

וּקְיֻר הַבְנֵן חַמְשָׁרָאָמָות רֶחֶב

סְכִיב | סְכִיב וּאַרְכּוֹת שְׁעָם אַפְּהָה:

13. וּמִן־רֹאשׁ הַבְּבִיטָה אַרְךָ מִאָה

אַפְּהָה וְהַגּוֹרָה וְהַבְנִיהָ וְקִידּוֹתָה

אַרְךָ מִאָה אַפְּהָה:

*Verse 10.* At a distance 20 cubits wide there were two suites of chambers each along the south and north sides of the הַיּוֹלֵד (see Chapter 42) (22 and 22–1).

*Verse 11.* The only exit from the side chambers of the הַיּוֹלֵד led to the open area located at the southeast and northeast of the edifice. (The chambers themselves were connected only by interlocking doors.)

*Verse 12.* Rashi defines גּוֹרָה as the ranking main structure of the Sanctuary itself. נִנְצָן refers to the side chambers surrounding the Sanctuary. The total width of the western side was 70 cubits. The computation of this figure, which otherwise would present some problems, would seem to support the assumption that נִסְבָּה in Verse 7 would denote stairwells which ran along the side chambers and must be included in the computation of the total width. וּקְיֻר הַבְנֵן would refer to the thickness of the walls of the side chamber and the stairwells (see אַרְכּוֹת). פָּאָתָה דָּרְךָ: The total length of the great structure from the west to the east (consisting of the chambers to the west of the Holy of Holies, the Holy of Holies itself and the הַיּוֹלֵד) was 90 cubits (see פָּצַח דָּרְךָ).

*Verse 13.* The total length, however, (from east to west) was 100 cubits; see Verse 15. הַגּוֹרָה is the Sanctuary itself; הַבְנִיהָ, the structure in the west, comprising the chambers and their walls.

14. The width of the front of the House and the main building to the east was one hundred cubits.

15. Thus he measured the length of the structure along the main building which also extended towards the back, and also the corner (chambers) on the one side and the other: one hundred cubits. As for the *Heichal*, the inner chamber and the vestibules of the court,

16. They had posts, the narrowing windows and the corner (pillars) at the three (chambers), the height of the posts, wood paneling round about from the floor up to the windows; the windows, too, were covered;

17. It extended (to the wall) over the door toward the inner chamber

14. וְרֹחֶב פָנֵי הַבָּיִת וְהַגּוֹרֶה  
לְקָרְבֵן מִמֶּה אֲמָה:

15. וּמִרְאֵן אַרְכְּדַבְּנָן אֶל-  
פָנֵי הַגּוֹרֶה אֲשֶׁר עַל-אַחֲרַיה  
וְאַתְּנוֹקְיָה אַמְפּוֹ וְמִפְנֵי מִמֶּה אֲמָה  
וְהַחִיל הַפְנִימִי וְאַלְמִי הַחַצָּר:

16. הַסְּפִירִים וְהַחַלּוּנִים הַאַטְמָמוֹת  
וְהַאֲתִיקִים | סְבִיב לְשַׁלְשָׁתָם גָּנָר  
הַסְּפִיר שְׁחוּר עַז סְבִיב | סְבִיב  
וְהַאֲדָרֶץ עַרְתְּחָלָנוֹת וְהַחֲלָנוֹת  
מֻכּוֹת:

17. עַל-מַעַל הַפְּתַח וְעַד-הַבָּיִת  
וְאַתְּנוֹקְיָה קָרֵי.

*Verse 14.* The total width at the east was greater than that at the west because there were chambers at both sides of the hall (*אלט*), 15 cubits each in length, for the storage of the knives (*בֵית הַחִלּוֹת*) [24]. Thus, the total width at the east was 100 cubits.

*Verse 15.* This verse explains how the total length of 100 cubits given in Verse 13 was arrived at. The meaning of *אתונקייה* is unclear. According toגרנות יונתן, it may denote a corner (thus, "corner-column" or pillar; Chapter 42, Verses 3–5 would support this definition). The reference is probably to the corner chambers at both corners of the hall which were included in the calculation of the total width. They were not included in the calculation of the length (90 cubits) given in Verse 12. If they are added, the resulting total length would be 100 cubits.

*אשר על אחרת:* The lateral structure of the chambers (בָנִין) running along the main building extended also to the rear, west of the Holy of Holies.

*Verse 15–17.* The phrase beginning with *וְהַחִיל* starts a new train of thought. *וְהַחִיל לְשַׁלְשָׁתָם* refers to the arrangement of chambers (see Verse 15) at the three sides of the Sanctuary. The meaning of *אֲתִיקִים* (see Verse 15) is unclear also in the present verse; the connotation of *שְׁחוּר* is equally unclear. The meaning

and also toward the outer (chamber), on the entire wall round about in the inner and outer (chamber).

**18.** It (i.e., the wood paneling) consisted of Cherubim and palm trees—one palm tree between one Cherub and the other Cherub; each Cherub had two faces:

**19.** A human face turned toward the palm tree on the one side and a lion's face turned toward the other side of the palm tree; so it was done in the entire House, round about.

**20.** From the floor, up to the top of the door, the Cherubim and

הַפְנִימִי וּלְחוֹזֶן וְאַלְכָלַתְהָרוֹר  
סְבִיב | סְבִיב בְּפָנִים יְבִחִיצָן  
מִדּוֹת:

**18.** וְעַשְׂיוֹן פְּרוּכִים וּתְמִרְים  
וְתְמִרָה בַּיְצְרוֹב לְכָרוֹב וְשָׁנִי  
פָּנִים לְכָרוֹב:

**19.** וּפְנֵי אֲכָם אַלְהַתְמָרָה מִפְּנֵי  
וּפְגִירְכְּפִיר אַלְהַתְמָרָה מִפְּנֵי עַשְׂיוֹן  
אַלְכָלַתְהָרוֹת סְבִיב | סְבִיב:

**20.** מִהָּאָרֶץ עַרְמָעֵל הַפְתָּחָה

of both terms must be deduced from the context in which they are used here. מִדּוֹת: literally, "dimensions." i.e., "there were such dimensions." The reference is to the wood paneling which was to be all around.

However, the wood paneling served only as a base for the gold covering; according to the Law of God, no bare wood was permitted to be seen in the Sanctuary. It is significant to note that, as we shall also see later on (Verse 21), the Prophet does not consider this Sanctuary as a completed structure (see Chapter 43, Verse 11).

*Verse 18 ff.* The wood paneling consisted of cherubim and palm tree motifs that were yet to be given their gold covering. There was one palm tree between the two cherubim; the child's face of the one cherub and the lion's face of the other both looked toward this palm tree.

Cherubim, the bearers of the Shechinah, looked expectantly at the "palm trees" to see whether the latter were ready to rally anew around the eternal Law of God (see Chapter 11). If so, they would have to allow themselves to be "planted in the House of the Lord" in order to "flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalms 92, 14).

*Verse 20.* קַרְיוֹ הַחִיל: The consonants of the word in this verse are topped by dots that usually indicate a "limiting connotation" (see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 29,28). Only here does the Prophet see symbols. This sight recalled to him sad memories of a time when he had seen, engraved

palm trees were mounted, as well as on the wall of the *Heichal*.

21. The *Heichal* had square posts. And in front of the Sanctuary was the appearance such as the appearance...

22. The altar of wood was three cubits high, its length was two cubits; it had (raised) corners, its length and its walls [were] of wood. And he said to me: This is the table that is before the countenance of God.

23. The *Heichal* and the Holy of Holies [each] had two double doors.

on the walls of the Sanctuary chambers, figures of quite a different character, monstrous products of human delusion (see Chapter 8, Verse 10).

*Verses 21–22.* המראה כתראה: This train of thought was left unfinished. However, see Chapter 43, Verse 3, for a more detailed explanation of כתראה.

The Prophet looks about him in amazement. Is it possible that the glory of God has already taken up its abode in His Sanctuary?

He contemplates the "golden" altar (25), but it is still unfinished—only bare wood without its gold covering.

פֶּה בְּמִדְבָּח וּסְלֵימָן בְּשַׁלֹּח (ברכות ט). It is difficult to see in this altar the one described in the Word of God as הַשְּׁלֹּח אֲשֶׁר לְנִזְיָה הַתְּמִימָה. Indeed, the Prophet can see neither the Ark of God's Law (ארון) nor the menorah and the shulchan in this Sanctuary of the future. The Law of God has accompanied Israel into exile, where Israel must train itself anew to become its bearers (ארון). In exile, Israel must learn to dedicate its lamp and its table to this Law. Before the golden altar can be finished, Israel's spiritual life (symbolized by the lamp) and its material aspirations (symbolized by the table) must once more become expressions of Israel's unreserved allegiance to God (קָדוֹת). But until then, הַשְּׁלֹּח אֲשֶׁר לְנִזְיָה the tables in exile can act as an altar, bringing to Israel atonement and God's nearness, if only they are dedicated to the cultivation of the virtues of man and the teachings of God: בָּזְמַן שְׁבֵית הַמִּקְדָּשׁ עַכְשִׁיו שְׁלֹטָן של ארם מִכְרָר. קִים מִזְבֵּח מִכְרָר עַל שְׂרָאֵל עַכְשִׁיו שְׁלֹטָן של ארם מִכְרָר.

תְּמִימָה refers to the roof area by which the length of the altar was measured; קִידּוֹת, the walls by which the height of the altar was measured (see Malbim).

הַכְּרוּבִים וְהַתְּמִימִים עַשְׂיוּם  
וְקִיר הַתְּמִימָה:

24. הַרְוִיכָל קְזִוָּתָ רְבָעָה וּפְנֵי  
הַקְּרֵשׁ הַמְּרָאָה כְּפֶרְאָה:

22. הַמְּזֻבָּח עַז שְׁלֹשׁ אַמְוֹת בְּלָה  
וְאַרְבָּבוֹ שְׁתִים־אַמְוֹת וּמִקְצָעָתוֹ  
לוֹ וְאַרְבָּבוֹ וּקְרוֹתָיו עַז וּוּבָרָאֵל  
זֶה הַשְּׁלֹחָן אֲשֶׁר לְפָנֵי וּזְהָוָה:

23. וְשְׁתִים דְּלָתֹות לְהַוְיכָל וּלְקָרֵשׁ:

**24.** Two hinged parts were on each wing of the doors; two revolving doors, two for the one door and two for the other.

24. ושתיים דלתות לרלבות  
שתיים מושבות דלתות שתיים  
 לרלה אחת ושתי דלתות  
 לאחרת:

**25.** And also on these, the doors of the *Heichal*, cherubim and palm trees were mounted, as they were mounted on the walls, wooden beams were placed on the front side of the vestibule from the outside,

25. עשויה אליהן אל-דלתות  
היכל כוריבים ותמדים באשר  
עשויים לקירות ועב עץ אל-פנוי  
האולם מהחיצון:

**26.** And narrowing windows and palm trees on the one side and the other side of the vestibule; supports for the House and the beams.

26. וחלונים אטומות ותמדים מפואר  
ומפואר-כפתות האולם ואצלעות  
הניות והעבים:

**Chap. 42.** 1. He led me out into the outer forecourt, the way toward the north, and he brought me into the chamber (complex) that was over against the main building and the structure, toward the north.

מ' וויצאנו אל---החצר  
החויזנה הדר בדרך הצפון  
ויבאנו אל-הילשנה אשר בוגר  
הנורא ואשר-בוגר הבניון אל-  
הצפון:

**Verse 24.** Each wing of the door consisted of two separate revolving parts (ושתים דלתות מושבות) that overlapped each other when the door was opened.

**Verse 25.** עב עץ: girders to reinforce the structure.

**Verse 26.** חטרים: palm trees on the posts of the hall; see Chapter 40, Verse 16. אלהות העבים are defined in נבא קמא ט. as supports on which the girders rest.

**Chapter 42, Verse 1.** The Prophet left the inner forecourt and from there was conducted through the north gate into the outer forecourt so that he might see the arrangement of chambers [22] (the term refers to the entire building) that extended at the north alongside the main building and its annex (as already noted in Chapter 41, Verse 10) over a distance of 20

2. The north entrance faced the length of one hundred cubits, the width being fifty cubits.

3. Over against the twenty (cubits) that (led) to the inner forecourt and over against the pavement of the outer forecourt; pillar facing pillar in the three floors.

4. And before the chambers a walkway ten cubits wide led to the interior, a distance of one cubit; but its doors were to the north.

5. These upper chambers were shorter, because the pillars had

2. אל-פְנֵי אָרֶךְ אַמּוֹת הַמִּأֵה  
פָּתַח הַאֲפֹן וְהַרְחֵב חֲמִשִׁים  
אַמּוֹת:

3. גַּנְגֵד הַעֲשָׂרוֹם אֲשֶׁר לְחַצֵּר  
הַפְנֵי וְגַנְגֵד רַצְفָה אֲשֶׁר לְחַצֵּר  
הַחִיצׁוֹנָה אַפְּתִיק אַל-פְנֵי אָתִיק  
בְּשַׁלְשִׁים:

4. וְלִפְנֵי הַלְשָׁכוֹת מִלְּדוֹד עֶשֶׂר  
אַמּוֹת רַחֵב אַל-הַפְנֵימִית דָּרֶךְ  
אַמּוֹת אַחַת וְפָתַחֵיכֶם לְאַפְּתִיק:  
5. וְהַלְשָׁכוֹת הַעֲלִיוֹנָת קָצְרוֹת

cubits. The only way the Prophet could reach this area was by stepping into the outer forecourt.

*Verse 2.* From the northern entrance to this arrangement of chambers [26] the visitor could see the outer forecourt over a length of 100 cubits and a width of 50 cubits.

*Verse 3.* This verse provides additional details on the location of this structure. The northern wall faced the flagstone floor (Chapter 40, Verse 17); at the south it was separated from the Sanctuary by a space of 20 cubits.

*Verse 4.* The building had three floors supported by rows of pillars, each pillar facing a pillar. *אתִיק וּנוּר*—see Chapter 41, Verse 15.

As in earlier passages, many passages in this verse and the verses that follow are not clear. We would refer the reader to Rashi's circumspect approach to these problems.

*Verse 4.* In order to reach the "inner area;" i.e., the area, 20 cubits in width, that lay between these chambers and the main building of the Sanctuary, it was necessary to go through a narrow passage, since there was a space of no more than one cubit between the southern wall of the "House of Chambers" and the wall of the inner forecourt [27].

Next, the visitor had to pass the chamber where the knives were stored (*בֵּית הַלִּיטָחוֹן*, see Chapter 41, Verse 14) [24], which was ten cubits wide. That is why the present verse speaks of a passage ten cubits *wide*, instead of ten cubits *long* (corresponding to the width of the *מִזְבֵּחַ*).

*Verses 5–6.* The house of chambers was situated high on the Temple Mount

taken away from them; that is, from the lowest and middle (chambers) of the building.

6. For they had three floors, and did not have columns like the columns of the forecourts; therefore the lowest and middle (chambers) had reduced floor space.

7. A wall located outside and across from the chambers, towards the outer forecourt, in front of the chambers: its length was fifty cubits.

8. For the length of the chamber toward the outer forecourt was fifty cubits; and, behold, pointing toward the *Heichal*, (they extended over) one hundred cubits.

9. And below these chambers, on the way that led from the east

כִּי־יָכוֹלוּ אֶתְיוֹקִים מִתְּנַהָּה  
מִהַפְּחַתְּנֹת וּמִתְּחִיכְנֹת בְּנֵנוֹן:  
6. כִּי מִשְׁלָשָׁות הָנָה וְאַין לְהָנָה  
עֲמוֹרִים כְּעַמּוֹרִי הַחֶצְרוֹת עַל־  
כַּן גַּאֲצֵל מִהַתְּחַלְּנֹת וּמִתְּחִילְנֹת  
מִהָּאָרֶץ:

7. וְגַנְבָּר אֲשֶׁר־לְחוֹזֵן לְעַמֶּת  
הַלְּשׁוֹכֹת דָּרְךְ הַחֶצֶר הַחֲצֹנָה אֶל־  
פָּנֵי הַלְּשָׁכוֹת אַרְכּוֹ חַמְשִׁים אַפְּהָה:  
8. כִּי־אָרְךְ הַלְּשׁוֹכֹת אֲשֶׁר לְחֶצֶר  
הַחֲצֹנָה חַמְשִׁים אַפְּהָה וְהָנָה עַל־  
פָּנֵי הַתְּוִיקֵל מֵאָה אַפְּהָה:

9. וּמִתְּחַתְּהָה לְשָׁכוֹת הַאֲלָה  
סְמֻחָתְהָה הַלְּשָׁכוֹת קָרֵי.

(עלינוות). Unlike the structure of the forecourts (6), it required particularly strong pillars to support it because it had three floors. On the lowest and the middle floors the pillars actually extended into the interior of the chambers, thus reducing their area, אבל (from יוכלו), in the same connotation as אצל, cf. Numbers 11,17). מטהארץ: However, since the pillars, while broad at the base, tapered off toward the top, this reduction of space was noticeable only on the floors of the chambers.

*Verses 7–8.* To the east, there was a wall separating this building from the rest of the forecourt; the length of this wall [28] corresponded to the width of this building; i.e., 50 cubits. It was intended that this building should be separated from the eastern part of the forecourt, for הנה, behold, the entire length of the building—100 cubits—was adjacent also on the outside to the היכל of which, in a manner, it was actually a part (see Verse 13).

*Verses 9–11.* Farther down to the east there were also chambers with dimensions and positions corresponding to those of the western chambers. The eastern wall of the forecourt could be reached by way of a path running

המבוא מתקנים בבאו להגנה מהחצר החיצונה:

ו. ברכבת גורר החצר בגד התקנים אל-פנוי תגורר ואל-פנוי הבני לשבות:

ו. ורדת לפניהם כפראה הלשכות אשר רבד האfon קארכו כן רחבו וכל מוצאיתו וכטשפטין וכפתחיהם:

ז. וכפתחן הלשכות אשר דרכן הדром פותח בראש גדור רבד בפניהם נגררת הנינה דרכ התקנים בבואה:

המביא קרי.

between the eastern wall of the outer forecourt and the eastern wall of the chambers.

*Verse 12.* It was already evident from Chapter 41, Verse 10 that to the south of the *היכל*, likewise, there was a house of chambers [22–I] corresponding in every detail to the chamber arrangement on the north side. In the present verse we are briefly told that at the southeastern side [30], too, opposite the house of chambers at the northeast, there was a building whose entrances faced in the same direction as those of the corresponding structure high on the Temple Mount [22–I].

*nnn:* In addition, these lower buildings had entrances [31, 32] that led to the "beginning of the way" (*בראש דרך*), meaning the path that led to the inner forecourt [33]. There, immediately to the east, there was one; according to tradition, this refers to *רוֹק לְהִיא* (*רוֹק לְהִיא* *לְבָנִים*) prepared expressly (*הַנּוּ*—“suited,” “adapted”) for the Levite choir to stand when they sang their hymns. It was to this platform that the entrances led.

13. He said to me: The northern chambers, the southern chambers that are before the main building—they are holy chambers where the priests who are close to God consume the most holy (offerings); there they lay the most holy, and the gift of homage, the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin and the guilt offering, for the place is holy.

14. When the priests enter they shall not step (immediately) from the Sanctuary into the outer forecourt; there they shall deposit their garments in which they performed the service, for they are holy; only when they have put on other garments shall they approach (the room) designated for the people.

15. After completing the measurements of the inner House, he led me out through the gate that faces toward the east and measured (the perimeter) on all sides.

כג. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלִי לְשָׁבּוֹת הַצְפֹּן  
לְשָׁבּוֹת הַדָּרוֹם אֲשֶׁר אֶל-פָּנַי  
הַגּוֹרָה הַגָּה | לְשָׁבּוֹת הַכְּנָשׁ  
אֲשֶׁר יַאֲכִל-זֶשֶׂם הַכְּנָנִים אֲשֶׁר-  
קָרְבָּנִים לְיְהוָה קָרְשִׁי הַקְּרָבָנִים  
שְׁם יְנִיחוּ | קָרְשִׁי הַקְּרָבָנִים  
וְהַמְּנִיחָה וְהַחְטֹאת וְהַעֲמָדָה קִי  
הַמְּקוֹם קָרְשִׁי:

כד. בְּבָאָם הַכְּנָנִים לְאַדְנָצָא  
מִתְהַקְּרָבָנִים אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַחִיצָנָה וְשָׁם  
יְנִיחוּ בְּגָנְרִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְטוּ בְּלָן  
כִּי קָרְשִׁי הַגָּה וְלִבְשׂוּ בְּגָנְרִים  
אַחֲרִים וְקָרְבּוּ אֶל-אֲשֶׁר לְעֵם:

כג. וְכֹלֶה אֶת-מִדּוֹת הַבֵּית הַפְּנִימִי  
וְהַוּצֹאנוּ בַּרְךָ הַשְׁעָר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָיו  
בַּרְךָ הַקְּרָבָנִים וּמִרְדוֹ סְבִיב | סְבִיב:  
וְלִכְשׂוּ קָרְיָה.

*Verse 13.* These chambers, those situated on the upper part [22, 22–I] of the Temple Mount, as well as those located on the lower part [29, 30], were holy chambers. This meant that they possessed the same degree of sanctity as the **ערוה**, so that the **קדשי הַקְּרָבָנִים** could be brought and eaten there. The priests **אשר קָרְבָּנִים לה'** are those referred to in Chapter 44, Verse 15. The **קדשי הַקְּרָבָנִים** and **מנחה ונוי** include the communal meal-of-peace offerings (וְכֹלֶה שלמי צבור).

*Verse 14.* These were also the chambers in which the priests were to store their sacred priestly garments before returning to the outer forecourt (see Chapter 44, 19).

*Verse 15.* Ezekiel now left through the same gate through which the Divine messenger had first led him into the Temple (Chapter 40, Verse 6). It was from there that the Divine messenger showed him the dimensions of the Temple Mount.

16. He measured the east side with the measuring rod: five hundred measuring rods, with the measuring rod from the one end to the other.

17. He measured the north side: five hundred measuring rods, with the measuring rod from the one end to the other.

18. He measured the south side: five hundred measuring rods with the measuring rod.

19. He turned to the west side, measured five hundred measuring rods with the measuring rod.

20. He measured it towards the four winds; it had a wall round about: five hundred the length, five hundred the width, to make a separation between the Sanctuary and the non-sacred.

**Chap. 43.** 1. And he led me to the gate, the gate that faced toward the east.

16. פָּנָד רוח תְּקֻרִים בְּקָנָה הַפְּנִירָה חַמְשׁ־אֲמֹת קָנִים בְּקָנָה הַפְּנִירָה סְכִיבָה:

17. פָּנָד רוח הַצְּפֹן חַמְשׁ־אֲמֹת קָנִים בְּקָנָה הַפְּנִירָה סְכִיבָה:

18. אֶת רוח הַרְרוֹם פָּנָד חַמְשׁ־אֲמֹת קָנִים בְּקָנָה הַפְּנִירָה:

19. סְכִיב אַלְיָוָת נִים פָּנָד חַמְשׁ־אֲמֹת קָנִים בְּקָנָה הַפְּנִירָה:

20. לְאַרְבָּעָ רְחוֹת קָרְרוֹ חָטָה לוֹ סְכִיב | סְכִיב אַזְּדָקָחָטָשׁ מְאוֹת וּרְחָבֶד חַמְשׁ־מְאוֹת לְהַבְּלִיל בֵּין הַקְּרָשׁ לְחָלָל:

מְג. וַיַּלְבַּד אַלְהָשָׁעָר שָׁעֵר אֲשֶׁר פָּנָה דָּרְךָ תְּקֻרִים: מְאוֹת קָרִי.

*Verse 16 ff.* 500 measuring rods (1 קָמָה = 6 אַמֹת) = 3,000 cubits.

*Verse 20.* חָטָה, see Chapter 40, Verse 5. חָלָל, in relation to the rules set down in the Law of God. We will see from the chapters that follow how, in a wider context, the Sanctuary of the future will impart קָדוֹשָׁה to the Jewish land and the Jewish state.

**Chapter 43, Verses 1–5.** The Prophet now witnesses the entry of the שכינה into the chambers of the Sanctuary. The שכינה came from the east to which it had once mournfully withdrawn (Chapter 11). The manifestations that announced the arrival of the שכינה were not new to Ezekiel. He had beheld them at the tragic moment when the City of God fell into ruins and his only comfort in this unspeakable tragedy was that, even far from home, the שכינה was waiting at the river K'var to be united with Israel (see Chapters 10–11).

2. And, behold, the glory of the God of Israel approached from the east, and its voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with His glory.

3. And the (earlier) vision was like the vision that I had seen: like the vision I saw when I came to destroy the city; visions like the vision which that I had seen at the river K'var—and I fell upon my face.

4. And the glory of ה' entered the House through the door that faced toward the east.

5. But the spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner forecourt and, behold, the House was filled with the glory of God.

6. And I heard one speaking to me from the House—and a man was standing beside me.

7. He said to me: Son of mankind, the place of My throne

2. וְהִנֵּה כָבֹד אֱלֹהִי יִשְׂרָאֵל בָּא  
מִגְרַד הַקָּרִים וּקוֹלוֹ בְכָל מָעוֹם  
רֶבֶים וְהָאָרֶץ בָּאֵירָה מִקְבָּרוֹ:

3. זְכֻמָּרָה נִפְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר רָאָתִי  
בִּפְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר־רָאָתִי בְּבָאֵי  
לְשִׁחתָה אֲתִיהָעֵיר וּמִרְאֹתָה  
בִּפְרָאָה אֲשֶׁר רָאָתִי אַל־נָהָרָה  
בְּכָרְבָּן אֲפָל אַל־פָּנָי:

4. זְכֻבָּד יְהוָה בָּא אֶל־הַבּוֹתָרָה  
שְׁעָרָאָשֶׁר פָּנָיו בָּרֶךְ הַקָּרִים:

5. וְתַשְׁאָנִי רָוח וְתַכְבוּאַנִי אַל־  
הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִי וְהִנֵּה פָלָא כְּבוֹד־  
יְהוָה הַבּוֹתָרָה:

6. וְאַשְׁמַע מִרְבָּר אַלְיָהָה  
וְאַיִשְׁ הִיא עַמְּרָא אַלְיָהָה:

7. וַיֹּאמֶר אַלְיָה בְּנֵאָדָם אַתְּ

And now the did indeed return, שכינה (Verse 4) through the gate of the היכל, banishing darkness from the earth (Verse 2). It was able to return as because Israel was now willing to live according to the requirements of God [in His quality of justice] so that כבָד ה' (אלקים) (Verse 4) in His infinite quality of mercy could reenter into its midst. On this transformation, see Chapter 10. On צומל אל טוי (Verse 3), see Chapter 1. Verse 28.

Verse 6. The Prophet hears the momentous message which God now addresses to him. שׁאַי, the Divine messenger who, until then, had been his guide, is standing beside him. Since God has now addressed His message directly to Ezekiel, the Prophet and the messenger can stand side by side as equals. מִרְבָּר: see Chapter 2, Verse 2. טהָבָת probably refers to the Holy of Holies; as is shown in Verse 1 of Chapter 44, the Prophet got only as far as the היכל, where he heard the Word of God.

Verse 7. This Sanctuary has become טהָבָת. True, the heavens are also

and the place of the soles of My feet, where I shall dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel (there I have built them) forever; as the House of Israel they and their kings will no longer defile My holy Name by their faithlessness, and by the corpses of their kings, their high places;

**8.** By placing their threshold next to Mine, their doorpost next to Mine, and (by raising) a wall between Me and them, and they defiled My holy Name by the abominations that they committed, so that I had to destroy them in My anger.

מָקוֹם כְּסָאִי וְאַתְּ-מָקוֹם בְּפֹוֹת  
רֶגֶל אֲשֶׁר אֲשֶׁר-שָׁם בְּתוֹךְ  
בֵּן-יִשְׂרָאֵל לְעוֹלָם וְלֹא יִטְמָא  
עֹור בֵּית-יִשְׂרָאֵל שֵׁם קָרְשֵׁי  
הַמִּתְּהָרֵךְ וּמִלְכֵיכֶם בְּנֹנוֹתֶם זְבָפְנָרִי  
מִלְכֵיכֶם בְּמוֹתֶם:

8. בְּתַחְתָּם סָפֶם אַתְּ-סָפֶי וּמוֹזָוָתֶם  
אֶצְל מוֹזָוָתִי וְהַקִּיר בֵּין  
וּבֵינֶיכֶם וּטְמָאָו | אַתְּ-שָׁם קָרְשֵׁי  
בְּתַחְבּוֹתֶם אֲשֶׁר עָשׂוּ וְאֶל אָוֹתֶם  
בְּאָפִי:

God's throne. **הַשְׁמִיט כְּסָאִי**, (Isaiah 66,1), but it is on earth that God desires to establish His true abode, מָקוֹם בְּבָדוֹ, the dwelling place of His glory. Once the Sanctuary has become the dwelling place of God's dominion, God will walk on earth in the midst of His people: בָּרוּךְ בְּבָד הַמִּקְדָּשׁ-בְּחֵךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל (Chapter 3, Verse 12) then becomes reality, and the Sanctuary will rise again, for all eternity. God's holy Name, which demands unreserved devotion in every aspect of human life, will no longer be denied and ignored in the House of Israel. For the House of Israel will then be the House of God, and Israel's state the State of God. Israel's homes will no longer be disgraced by faithlessness to God (**תָּנוּגָה**). Its kings will no longer use the "high places" next to Zion for the worship of powers alien to God. They will no longer reject the one power that could give them life and, as a result of their rejection, turn into dead bodies (**פְּנָרִי מִלְכִים**). **תָּנוּגָה** is to be understood in relation to בְּתָחוֹת, the place of the soles of My feet.

**Verse 8.** "It is this regrettable division of life into religious and secular, spiritual and material, Godly and worldly, that prevents the world from being part of the Kingdom of Heaven and the spiritual and Godly forces ruling over all that is human and earthly" (*Collected Writings*, Vol. IV, p.94).

"'A house also for God!' But pray do not try to make their own homes become His! They are willing to pay a visit to God in His House but they will not have Him visit them in their homes where His presence and His requirements may very well be inconvenient!" (Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 28,22).

**תָּנוּגָה**: They had to pay a heavy penalty for this grievous error.

9. Now they will keep their faithlessness and the corpses of their kings away from Me, and I will dwell in their midst forever.

10. \* But you, son of mankind, show to the house of Israel the House so that they may be ashamed of their sins; let them measure the floor plan.

11. And if they are filled with shame because of all that they have done, then make known to them the form of the House and its furnishings, its exits and its

ו. עֲתָה יְרַחֵקוּ אֶת־זִנּוֹתָם וְפָגַנְנֵי  
מִלְכֵיכֶם מִפָּנֵי וְשָׁבְגַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ  
לְעוֹלָם: ס

ט. אַתָּה בְּרוֹאָרֶם הַגָּר אֶת־  
בֵּית־יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת־הַבָּוֹת וּבְלַמּוֹ  
מִשְׁעָנוֹתֵיכֶם וּמְרֻרוֹ אֶת־תְּקִנּוֹתָה:

י. וְאִסְמְגַלְמֹז מִבְּלָא אֲשֶׁר־עָשָׂו  
צְוָת הַבָּוֹת וְתְכֻנוֹתָו וּמוֹצָאָיו  
וּמוֹבָאָיו נְכַל־צָרוֹתָו וְאַתָּה בְּלָ

צָרוֹתָיו קָרֵי.

\*See M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, p. ח'זא.

**Verse 9.** All this will then become a thing of the past. When the Sanctuary of the future will arise, Israel will have learned to banish even the appearance of disloyalty from God's nearness. No longer will fawning pseudo-kings set foot in the chambers of His Sanctuary. At that time God's **שָׁכִינָה** will dwell forever as a "neighbor" (**שָׁכִינָה-שָׁכֵן**) in Israel's midst.

**Verse 10.** The Prophet now receives God's command to call upon the "House of Israel" to build a House of God in this spirit. For **הַגָּר**, see Chapter 40, Verse 4. Ezekiel must not rest until his people, with the vision of this edifice of the future before their eyes, will understand the grand ideal to which they should consecrate their own homes and will feel shame and remorse over their former moral decay and alienation. However, they must not allow their sense of shame and guilt to mire them in helpless despair; they must not hesitate for even a moment to lend a hand in laying the foundations for the true sanctuary that will hallow every aspect of their lives: **מְדֹדוֹ אֲתָה חַכְמִית**.

תְּקִנּוֹת, from **תְּקִנָּה**, see Chapter 28, Verse 12.

**Verse 11.** **צָרוֹתָה** (**חַכְמָתוֹ**) refers to the total picture. **כָּכְלָה** (**חַכְמָתוֹ**) apparently refers to the arrangement of the Sanctuary into its various parts. **לְצָרוֹתָיו** would seem to denote the shapes and forms of the various sacred objects in the Sanctuary; **כָּל** **חַקְמָתוֹ**, their precise function; **וְכָל** **חוֹרְבָּתוֹ**, the symbolic significance of the Sanctuary and its sacred objects.

טוֹבָאָיו וּטוֹבָאָיו: "The significance of the exit from the Sanctuary is even greater than that of the entrance. Not how you entered the Sanctuary, but how you left it will demonstrate whether and how you stood before God. This may be the reason why, in Ezekiel 43,11, where the image of the Sanctuary is held

entrances, all its designs and all its regulations, all its patterns and all its teachings, and write them down before their eyes so that they may retain its whole appearance and all its laws, and carry them out.

12. This is the teaching with regard to the House: Upward, to the summit of the mountain, its whole territory! On all sides, all around, it is the Sanctuary of Sanctuaries! Behold, this is the teaching of the House.

13. And these are the measurements of the altar in cubits: such

חֲקֻתָיו וְכָל-צָוֹרְתָו וְכָל-תּוֹרָתָה  
הוֹנֵעַ אֶוְתָם וְכָתֵב לְעֵינֵיכֶם  
וַיִּשְׁמְרוּ אֶת-כָל-צָוְרָתָה וְאֶת-  
כָל-חֲקֻתָיו וְעִשُו אֶוְתָם:

ז. זֶה תּוֹרַת הַבַּיִת עַל-רֹאשׁ  
הַהָר כָל-גָּבָל סְבִיב אֶסְבִּיב קָרְשׁ  
קָרְשִׁים הַהָרִזְאת תּוֹרַת הַבַּיִת:

ט. וְאֵלֶה מִדּוֹת הַמִזְבֵּחַ בְּאַמּוֹת  
וְתוֹרַתְךָ קָרֵי. תּוֹרַתְךָ קָרֵי.

up to the people as the ideal before which they should blush with shame, the exits (פְּרוֹצָאוֹ) are mentioned before the entrances (סְבוֹאָיו) (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus, end of Chapter 28). Even now, in *galuth*, they can begin the work so that this Sanctuary of God will someday arise.

*Verse 12.* "All the rooms of the Sanctuary and their contents are described as חֻווָות, 'teachings.' Literally, this means that they contain seeds of life-giving truths with which to fructify Israel and all mankind. All these חֻווָות are summarized in the present verse, with majestic succinctness, in this one חֻווָה, this one sentence, 'Up to the height of the mountain, all His domain.' This means: 'All of you, members of the human race, are hereby invited to ascend the height of this mountain. The ideal symbolized by the Sanctuary of the Law upon the mountain's summit is the ideal set for all of you to follow. Therefore all of you are *His* [i.e. God's] domain.' "

"Round about, it is the Holy of Holies." It, i.e., the Law enthroned upon the mountain, is the source of all holiness, of all exaltation, for it is the source of all truth concerning the eternal destiny of man." (M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, ibid.).

Even in *galuth* such a חֻווָת הַבַּיִת could be translated into reality. In the verses that follow, the Prophet is shown the altar [34] which will ultimately rise before the entrance of the Sanctuary, calling upon all of us to realize in our own lives the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary. This is the most eloquent presentation of חֻווָת הַבַּיִת.

*Verse 13.* The exposition that follows is based on the commentary of Rashi, who in turn based his explanations on the details given by our Sages

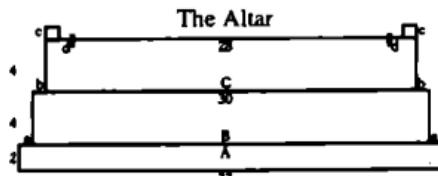
a cubit is a cubit and a hand's breadth; but for the foundation the (regular) cubit applies and (such) a cubit also for the width (of the perimeter); and the border surrounding its top on all sides is a span and the same for the elevation of the altar.

אַפְּה אַפְּה וּתְפֵח וּתְקִינָה אַמְּתָה  
וְאַמְּתָה דָּרְחָב וּגְבוּלָה אֶל-שְׁפָתָה  
סְבִיב וּרְתַת הָאָתָר וְזֹה גַּבְּ הַפְּזָבָתָה

(טנוֹת צו:) for the altar's specifications. On the symbolic significance of the altar and its parts, see Hirsch Commentary on Chapter 27 of Exodus.

According to our Sages, the present verse refers to a double cubit, a larger one measuring six hand's breadths and a smaller one measuring five hand's breadths: The larger cubit is used for the measurements of the altar proper; the smaller, for the required height of the **יסוד**, the base [A] or **חיק** as it is called in the present verse and **חיק הארץ**, the bosom of the earth (in Verse 14). The smaller measure is used also to specify the width of the **סובב**; the circular walk atop the two first steps [a,b] for the priests, which in the present verse is simply referred to as **רוחב**, "the width." It is used, likewise, in measuring the **קרונות**, the "rays of the altar" [c] which rise at each of the altar's four corners and which are called **שפתה אל שפתה סביב** in the present verse. Finally, it is used in the description of the golden incense altar in the Sanctuary, an altar which is presented as the continuation and the final symbolic objective of the **קרנות** of the sacrificial altar (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus, Chapter 30) and is therefore called **גב** "the height of the altar" in the present verse. The close symbolic link between **חיק**, the foundation that is called the "bosom of the earth," symbolizing the first step of spiritual elevation, on the one hand, and the high corners, the goal toward which the bottom step is directed, on the other, might explain why the **מִזְבֵּח** that surround the upper edge are described in the present verse as "the boundary (of the **שפתה** (of the **חיק**) which continues until the enclosures of the upper edge."

**רוחב** is equal to half a cubit, but since the sides of the high corners were one cubit long, this measurement must have been made from the center.



The figures represent cubits

14. And from the depths of the ground to the lowest plateau: two cubits; the width: one cubit; and from the small plateau to the large plateau: four cubits; and the width: the (afore mentioned) cubit.

14. וּמְחִיק הָאָרֶץ עַד-הַעֲזֹרָה  
הַתְּחִתּוֹנָה שְׁתִים אַמּוֹת וּרְחֵב  
אַפְּהָאָתָה וּמְהֻעָרָה הַקְּטָבָה  
עַד-הַעֲזֹרָה הַגְּרוּלָה אַרְבָּע אַמּוֹת  
וּרְחֵב הַאַפְּהָאָתָה:

15. And the "Mountain of God": four cubits; from the "Ariel" upward: the four "rays of the altar."

15. וּמִהָּרָאֵל אַרְבָּע אַמּוֹת  
וּמִהָּרָאֵל וּלְמַעַלָּה הַקְּרָנוֹת  
אַרְבָּע:

16. The "Ariel" (the hearth) shall be twelve (cubits) long by twelve wide, square (measured

16. וּמִהָּרָאֵל שְׁתִים עָשָׂרָה אַרְךָ

וּמִהָּרָאֵל קָרֵי. הַהָּרָאֵל קָרֵי.

*Verse 14.* The height of the [A] was two cubits; the first enclosing walk (חַדֵּב) [a] that followed was called עֲרוֹה הַקְּסָנָה or עֲרוֹה חַתְּמָה; the second (b) [b] above the elevation of four cubits [B] was called עֲרוֹה גְּנוּלָה.

*Verse 15.* The "mountain of God," was that part of the altar [C] to which the lower parts were merely a preliminary stage, as it were. This part of the altar, begun at a height of six cubits from the ground (two plus four cubits, see Verse 14), was four cubits high. Its top surface was reserved for the incineration of the offerings. This surface was called אַרְיאָל, an allusion to אֱשָׁדָה, the "fire of the Law" which, mighty like a lion, awaited man's free-willed self-dedication to the Law of God. This was the place "upon which the fire of the Law blazes forth, calling upon us to purify and sanctify every aspect of earthly life, doing so with such devotion and hallowed upward striving that our lives here below may nourish the Divine on earth and meet with God's approval on high" (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus Chapter 27). The שְׁתִים, the "rays of the altar," rose from each of the four corners of the אַרְיאָל surface.

*Verse 16.* The 12 cubits named here were also measured from the center; hence, they actually represent an area of 24 square cubits. Note that, according to tradition, the base was 32 cubits long, that the second elevation directly above the base was one cubit shorter on either side, thus having a total length of 30 cubits and that the תְּחִתּוֹנָה was one cubit shorter than the second elevation on either side, continuing over a length of 28 cubits. As a consequence, the total area of the altar's surface was 28 square cubits. Of this area, the קְרָנוֹת [c] occupied one square cubit on either side, leaving an area of 26 square

from the center) toward its four sides.

17. Yet the (entire upper) plateau shall be fourteen cubits long by fourteen cubits wide, measured (from the center) toward its four sides. And the top border which surrounded it from all sides: one half cubit; its base: one cubit from all sides. Its upward leading ramps in such a manner that one turned toward the east.

18. Then he said to me: Son of mankind, thus has the Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: these are the

בשְׁתִים עֲשָׂרָה רַחֵב רֶבֶע אֶל  
אֶרֶבֶע תְּרֵבֶע:

וְהַעֲרָה אֶרֶבֶע עֲשָׂרָה אֶרֶךְ  
בְּאֶרֶבֶע עֲשָׂרָה רַחֵב אֶל אֶרֶבֶע  
תְּרֵבֶע וְהַגְּבוּל סְכִיב אֹתָה חָצֵי  
הַאֲמָה וְהַתִּקְדֵּלה אַמָּה סְכִיב  
וּמְעַלְתָּהוּ פְּנוּת קָרִים:

וְנִאֱמַר אֵלִי בּוֹרָא מִבָּה אָמַר  
אַרְנֵן יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים חֻקּוֹת הַמּוֹבֵחַ

cubits. An additional area had to be set aside [d] for the enclosing walk to accommodate the procession of the priests, thus leaving for the incineration site, the various טערכות, the altar, an area of 24 square cubits.

*Verse 17.* והעורה refers to the "mountain of God" and its top surface rising on the second circular walk (עורה גדרה, Verse 14).

Fourteen cubits: measured from the center; i.e., an area measuring 28 square cubits. וְהַגְּבוּל: the high corners, also measured from the center, i.e., one full cubit. וְהַחַיק: the width of the circular walk on the base (יסוד) is one cubit. Note that this last figure is not measured from the center. Perhaps this was done in order to add emphasis to the difference between this future Sanctuary and the First and Second Temples. In the first two Temples the base had been augmented only on the northern and western sides of the altar; on the southern and eastern sides it was only one cubit larger. In the future Temple described here, however, the base of the altar will be complete, hence סכיב. For the symbolic significance of the incomplete base for the altar and its completion in the future Temple, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 1,5.

**טַעַלְתָּהוּ:** The ramps leading to the steps and to the top of the altar were placed on the south side to allow the priests to face east, initially, when ascending the altar to perform the sacrificial service. (The priests always circled the altar in a counterclockwise direction.)

*Verse 18.* The present verse and the verses that follow give the ceremonial details for the consecration of the future altar. The priest who will conduct

laws of the altar on the day when it is being constructed in order to sacrifice elevating offerings upon it and sprinkle blood toward it.

19. Give to the priests, the Levites, who are of the seed of Zadok, who are close to Me, to serve Me, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: a young bullock for an offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin.

20. And you shall take from its blood and put it on its four high corners and at the four corners of the (upper) plateau and its surrounding (lower) border, and cleanse it of sin and effect atonement for it.

בְּיוֹם הַעֲשׂוֹת לְהַעֲלֹת עָלָיו  
עַלְהָ וּלְזָרֶק עַלְיוֹ כְּמֵ:

19. וְגַתְתָּה אֶל־הַכְּנִים הַלְוִיִּם  
אֲשֶׁר هֵם מָרוּעָ צָרוֹק הַקְרָבִים  
אֱלֹי נָאָם אַלְגַּי יְהֻהָה לְשַׁرְתָּנִי פָּר  
בָּדָבָר לְחַפְּאת:

20. וְלִקְחַת מִרְמָה וְנִתְתַּחַת עָלָיו<sup>1</sup>  
אַרְבָּע קְרָנְתִּיו וְאַלְ-אַרְבָּע פְּנִזּוֹת  
הַחֲנָרָה וְאַלְ-הַגְּבָל סְכִיב חַפְּאת  
אוֹתוֹ וּכְפַרְתָּהוֹ:

the ceremony is to be none other than the Prophet himself (Verse 19). The people, alas, were not worthy of seeing the Temple built during the Prophet's lifetime; to this day, the Sanctuary must remain the object of our yearnings. But then do we not have the blissful certainty that the dead (ברוח המת) will come to life again (see קידוש)? Are not all these promises guaranteed by God Himself Who, in His almighty power, shapes the future of all mankind? <sup>ואם</sup> (Verses 18–19).

The ceremonial acts enumerated in these verses differ in some respects (see Verse 22) from the rites and expiatory offerings described in Chapter 29 of Exodus for the altar in the בזבז. On the symbolic significance of these rites, see Hirsch Commentary, *ibid.*

*Verse 19. נֶלְאַת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ:* see Chapter 44, Verse 15.

*Verse 20.* The description of the sites at which the blood of the animal offerings had to be sprinkled presents some difficulty. In Verse 17 the בזבז are referred to as the הגבָל. As a consequence, one would presume that the reference is to the תְּמִזְבֵּחַ, the lower border of the altar. תְּמִזְבֵּחַ could refer to the corners of the upper enclosing walk (סוכב) (see M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*). On the other hand, as is also Rashi's opinion, the reference might be to the corners of the top of the altar (תְּמִזְבֵּחַ) which are not identical with the תְּמִזְבֵּחַ. In that case, the objections raised in Mendel Hirsch's commentary on the Haftoroth to Rashi's view would be irrelevant. The opinion expressed in the Mendel Hirsch

21. And you shall take the bullock of the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin; and it should be burnt at a place designated for this purpose in the house outside the Sanctuary.

22. And on the second day you shall bring a he-goat without blemish as an offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, and they will cleanse the altar from sin even as they cleansed it from sin with the bullock.

23. When you have completed the cleansing from sin, you shall bring a young bullock without blemish and a ram without blemish from the flock.

24. You shall bring them near before God, and the priests shall cast salt upon them and offer them to God as an elevating offering.

25. Seven days shall you present a bullock for the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, for each day, and a young bullock and a ram from the flock, they shall be presented without blemish.

21. וְלֹקַחַת אֶת הַפָּר הַחֲטֹאת  
וּשְׁרֵטוֹ בְּמִפְקַד הַבֵּית מִחוֹזָה  
לְמִקְרָשָׁה:

22. וּבְיוֹם הַשְׁנִי תִּקְרַיב שְׁעִירָה  
עַזְיָם תְּמִימִים לְחַטֹּאת וְחַטֹּאת אֶת-  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ כַּאֲשֶׁר חָטָאוּ בְּפָר:

23. בְּכָל-וֹתָךְ מְחַטָּאת קָרֵיב בְּפָר בָּן  
בָּקָר תְּמִימִים וְאַיִל מִן-הַצָּאן תְּמִימִים:

24. וְהַקְרְבָתָם לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְהַשְׁלִיכָם  
הַכְּבָנִים עֲלֵיכֶם מֵלֹח וְהַעֲלִלוּ אֹוֹתָם  
עַלְהָה לִיהְנוֹה:

25. שְׁבֻעָת יְמִים תִּعְשֶׂה שְׁעִירָה  
חַטֹּאת לַיּוֹם וְפָר בְּזִדְבָּקָר וְאַיִל  
מִן-הַצָּאן תְּמִימִים יִעֲשֶׂוּ:

commentary, that the term עֹורָה does not refer to the top of the altar, is based on an error (see Verse 17); there, too, עֹורָה does indeed refer to the top of the altar instead of a בָּנָה.

*Verse 22.* On the second day a שְׁעִיר עִזִּים is offered as a תְּמִימָה instead of a בָּקָר. In addition there are the ascent offerings named in Verse 23.

*Verse 24.* The emphasis on מֵלֹח in this passage is meant to underscore the symbolic significance of the command קָרֵיב מֵלֹח; see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 2:13.

*Verse 25.* שְׁבֻעָת יְמִים, counted from the second day; thus, the consecration ceremonies extended over a period of eight days (Verse 27) (see Malbim).

**26.** For seven days they shall effect atonement for the altar, and cleanse it and consecrate it.

**27.** They shall complete these days and then it shall come to pass that on the eighth day and from then on the priests shall present your elevating offerings and your meal-of-peace offerings on the altar, and I shall accept you with favor, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 44.** 1. He led me back on the way of the outer gate of the Sanctuary that looks towards the east, and it was shut.

26. שְׁבֻעָת יְמִים יַכְפֹּרְזֶ אֶת־  
הַמִּזְבֵּחַ וַתְּהִרְאֵ אֶתְךָ וְמַלְאֹךְ  
27. וַיַּכְלֵל אֶת־הַיּוֹם סְוִתָּה בַּיּוֹם  
הַשְׁמִינִי וְהַלְאָה יַשְׁוֵה הַכְּהֻנִּים  
עַל־הַמִּזְבֵּחַ אֶת־שְׁלֹמֹתְיכֶם וְאֶת־  
שְׁלֹמְיכֶם וְרָצְאָתִי אֶתְכֶם נָאֵם  
אֲדֹנִי וְהָווָה: ס

מִרְדֵּן וַיָּשַׁב אֶתְיוֹ גַּדְעֹן שַׁעַר  
הַמִּקְרָשׁ הַחִיצוֹן הַפָּנֵה קָרְבָּנִים וְהָוָא  
סְגּוֹר: דָּרוּ קָרְבָּן.

**Verse 26.** וְמַלְאֹךְ יְדוֹ, "to consecrate;" literally, "to empower," "to place power into the hands of another." As a rule, Scripture uses this term in this sense only in connection with people. Here, the thought to be conveyed is that the altar should henceforth have the power, untainted by the "moral shortcomings" of those who built it (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 29.36), to serve the realization of the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary.

**Verse 27.** וְרָצְאָתִי אֶתְכֶם: It is you, not your offerings, that God wishes to accept with favor.

**Chapter 44, Verse 1.** The Divine messenger led the Prophet back through the outer gate of the קָרְבָּן—הַמִּזְבֵּחַ: through the gate located near the hall (אלטן). The הַיּוֹם had double gates; one of these, the west gate, led to the interior of the Sanctuary. **הָוָא סְגּוֹר:** According to tradition (מדות פ"ב מ"ב) there were also two small doors, one to the right and one to the left of the gate of the הַיּוֹם. He found the southern door locked. Since this door was part of the gate of the הַיּוֹם, its being locked could well serve as a perpetual reminder of the thought expressed in Verse 2.

The phrase **הָוָא סְגּוֹר** can refer only to an entrance belonging to the gate of the הַיּוֹם, especially because we were told in the same verse that the Prophet went out through the gate of the הַיּוֹם.

2. And God said to me: This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, no one is to enter through it, for the God of Israel, has entered through it, and it shall remain closed.

3. As to the prince, he is the prince; he shall sit in it in order to dine before God. He shall enter by the way through the vestibule of the gate and go out by the same way.

4. He brought me through the north gate to the front of the House, and I looked and, behold,

ו. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים יְלֻכָּה הַשַּׁעַר הַזֶּה  
סְגֻנָּר וְהַיָּה לֹא יִפְתַּח וְאֵישׁ לֹא  
בָּא בָּו כִּי וְהַיָּה אֱלֹהִים שְׁרָאֵל  
בָּא גָּו וְהַיָּה סְגֻנָּר:

ג. אֲתָה הַנְּשָׂא נְשִׂיא הוּא יִשְׁבַּב  
בּוֹ לְאַכְול חַמֵּם לִפְנֵי וְלֹעֲגַל מִרְדֵּךְ  
אַלְמָם הַשַּׁעַר יָבֹא וּמִרְדֵּכָו יֵצֵא:

ד. וַיֹּבְיאָנִי דָּרְךָ שַׁעַר הַצְּפֹן אֶל  
פָּנֵי הַבַּיּוֹת וְאֶרְאָה וְהַעֲנָה מִלְּאָ  
תָּרָה.

*Verse 2.* One of the entrances to the **היכל** is to remain permanently locked. **ה' אלקי ישראל** (cf. Chapter 43, Verses 2 and 4) has taken possession of His Sanctuary, never to depart from it again (see Malbim). This Sanctuary will never again suffer **שכינה**.

*Verse 3.* It is significant that, in a chapter dealing with the priests whom God has called to serve in His Sanctuary, so much prominence should be given to the role of the prince. As we have already noted in Chapter 34 and will be told again in the chapters that follow, the God-ordained function of the prince, from the very beginning, was to be the first servant of the Sanctuary; i.e., of the Law of God, whose realization is his foremost duty. In the present verse we are told that the prince must eat his portion of the offerings within the gateway of the door (**ישַׁב בּוֹ**), though the door itself will remain permanently closed. "The words 'ה' אללי לך לְמַנֵּי ה' invite the one making the offering to dine with God, as it were; **מִשְׁלֹחַ גְּבוּהַ קָוָו** the meal is eaten in the presence of God" (Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 18,12). When even the prince is invited by God to dine in His presence, the prince should keep his eyes on the locked door and, at that moment, solemnly vow to keep this door locked forever (see Verse 2).

**סְדָרָךְ וְגָרָ:** see Chapter 46, Verse 8.

*Verse 4.* The Divine messenger had Ezekiel pass through the northern gate of the inner forecourt (see Verse 5). God's glory now filled the Sanctuary which, through the ritual described in the previous chapter, had already been consecrated as a **בֵּית ה'** (hence the designation **בֵּית ה'** here as distinct from **הַבַּיּוֹת**)

the glory of God had filled the House of God, and I fell upon my face.

5. And God said to me: Son of mankind, direct your mind and see with your eyes and listen with your ears to all that I will tell you regarding all the laws of the House of God and all its teachings; direct your mind to the entrance of the House at all the exits of the Sanctuary.

6. And say to the (embodiment of) disobedience, the house of Is-

כְבָדֵר־יְהוָה אֶת־בֵּית יְהוָה וְאֶפְלָא  
אַל־פָּנָי

וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים וְהַתִּשְׁמַע לְבָקָר וְרָאָה בְּעֵינֶיךָ וּבְאָזְנוֹיךָ  
שְׁמַע אֶת כָּל־אֲשֶׁר אָנֹי מְرַכֵּב אֶתְךָ לְכָל־חֲקֻות בֵּית־יְהוָה וְלְכָל־  
תּוֹרַתְךָ וְשְׁמַתְתָּ לְבָקָר לְסִכְ�וָא הַבֵּית  
בְּכָל מָזְצָאֵי הַמִּקְרָשָׁה:

וְאֶמְרָתְךָ אַל־מְרוֹי אֶל־בֵּית

גָּרוּחוֹ קָרֵי.

in Chapter 43, Verse 5). Overwhelmed by the sight, Ezekiel fell upon his face (see Chapter 1, Verse 28) to hear the new message from God.

*Verse 5.* The Prophet is commanded to direct all his senses, his eyes and his ears, to the laws and the relevant truths which God is about to communicate to him regarding this "House of God." These laws and truths should suggest themselves to him from the mere sight of this edifice. This house (*בֵּית*) is meant to become a *מקדש*, a Sanctuary which should serve to hallow every phase of life. When the visitor first enters it, it is still merely a *בֵּית־הַבָּאָה* (*בֵּית־הַבָּאָה*); only after the visitor has left it will it be seen whether he had indeed been in the *מקדש* and had taken away with him high resolves to make his own life holy. That is why these entrances are regarded, first and foremost, as *פְּנָאי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ* exits for those who have made this house the source of their life's sanctity. It is these exits that determine the effectiveness of the entrances or, more precisely, of the one entrance. For in view of what has just been said, it is clear beyond doubt that this house admits only those who see it as *פְּנָאי הַמִּקְדָּשׁ*. There are exits in every direction but painstaking controls at the one entrance so that this *מִקְדָּשׁ* should never again become an ordinary "house," alienated from God.

In view of the foregoing, it is by no means insignificant that the messenger of God should have been instructed to conduct Ezekiel through the north gate in front of the Sanctuary (Verse 4). For at this very gate the Prophet had first learned of the shameful manner in which the House of God had been desecrated by the abominations of the "House of Israel" (Verse 6; cf. Chapter 8, Verse 6; see Chapter 8, Verses 3 ff., our commentary, *ibid.*)

*Verse 6.* God now addresses His message from His future Sanctuary to the "House of Israel" for whom this Sanctuary should someday become the true

rael: Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who envelops His loving kindness in justice: all your abominations, house of Israel! let it suffice you of them.

7. Because you brought into My Sanctuary alien sons of uncircumcised heart and uncircumcised flesh, that they should be in my Sanctuary to desecrate it, when it is My House; because you brought My offering, fat and blood, and they have broken My covenant to add to all your abominations,

8. And because you did not keep the charge of My Sanctuaries but

ישָׂרָאֵל כֹּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה  
רַבְלֵיכֶם מִכָּל-תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיכֶם בֵּית  
יִשְׂרָאֵל:

7. בְּהַבְּנֵיכֶם בְּנֵי-גָּנָּךְ עַרְלִילָּב  
וּשְׁרָלָּי בְּשָׂר לְתֹהוֹת בְּמִקְרָשָׁי  
לְחַלְלוֹ אַתְ-בִּתְיֻן בְּהַקְרִיבָכֶם אַתְ  
לְחַמְלֵי חַלְבָּן וְלָם וּפְרוֹ אַתְ-בְּרוֹתִי  
אֶל כָּל-תּוֹעֲבֹתֵיכֶם:

8. לֹא שִׁמְרָתֶם מִשְׁמָרָת קָרְשָׁי

"place of life," uniting the nation into one "house." To purify this nation and lift it up from the depths of corruption is to be Ezekiel's life work (Chapter 2). This nation has sinned grievously against the Sanctuary of God. And as if their ungodly conduct had not been sufficient insult to the Sanctuary, these people extended their mockery of God into the very chambers of His holy place.

Verses 7–8 are a preamble to Verse 9.

Verse 7. If at least the priests had remained loyal to their duty, if they themselves had remained faithful servants of this Sanctuary both in theory and in practice, the Sanctuary might have accomplished the nation's moral rebirth. But alas, the opposite was the case. The men who performed their priestly functions in God's own holy place had become the willing tools of a corrupt nation. They had appointed as their spokesmen (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 12,43), "sons of alienation," whose conduct branded them as pagans, individuals whose hearts were stubborn, who refused to submit to the supreme sovereignty and the formative power of the fiery Law of God, or who, perhaps, even worse, were despising, or possibly even lacking, also the physical symbol of moral subordination to God's Law (see *וּבְחִימָם כְּבָבָם*). And so this House of God was cruelly desecrated. God's Law demands of the priests: קְרָשִׁים יִהְיוּ לְאֱלֹקִים וְלֹא יְחַלְלוּ שֵׁם אֱלֹקִים כִּי אֵת אֲשֶׁר ה' לְתָם (Leviticus 21,6); the concepts and אֲשֶׁר ה' מִקְרִיבָם חִי קְדָשָׁם לְתָם אֱלֹקִים and אֲשֶׁר ה' מִקְרִיבָם חִי קְדָשָׁם comprise all the duties the priests are expected to perform in their own lives

appointed yourselves to be keepers of My Sanctuary's trust.

9. (Therefore) thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: any alien son who is of uncircumcised heart and uncircumcised flesh shall not enter My Sanctuary: (this applies) to every alien son who is in the midst of the sons of Israel.

וְתִשְׁמֹונָו לְשָׁמְרֵי מִשְׁמָרַתִּי  
בְּמִקְדְּשֵׁי לְכֶם:  
9. כִּהֵן אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה בְּלִבְנֵי  
גָּבָר עַרְלָל לְבָב וְעַרְלָל בָּשָׂר לֹא בְּבוֹא  
אַל-מִקְדְּשֵׁי לְקָלְבָּנְגָּבָר אֲשֶׁר  
בַּתּוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל:

outside the Sanctuary (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 3,11). This implies that they allow themselves to be pervaded and dominated by the fire of God's Law, but instead, the individuals who were ordained to represent this nation in the Sanctuary are **עַרְלָל!** These are the impure hands with which the people permit the **לְבָב** to be offered to God; these are the hands which they expect to provide the fire of God's Law with nourishment fit to prepare a dwelling place for God's presence on earth. And as a consequence, the place that should have been dedicated forever to the constant renewal of God's covenant with Israel had become witness to the most wanton breaches of that very covenant.

*Verse 8.* In Numbers 18,5 (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.) the demand is spelled out that בֵּית דָן של יִשְׂרָאֵל, the supreme representative body of the nation, watch over the priests to see that they perform their functions according to the Law. The words שָׁמְרָתָם שְׁמָרָתָךְ in the present verse (**קדשָׁי**, a plural form) parallel שָׁמְרָתָם אֲתָּה שְׁמָרָתָךְ in Numbers 18,5. It is the function of the priests to guard and to maintain the Sanctuary that symbolizes the mission of Judaism itself and the altar that symbolizes the devotion to this very mission. The priests should be **שָׁמְרִים**, guardians of the spiritual treasures entrusted to their care by God. But these priests were "appointed" **לְכֶם**, by you, as guardians and obedient spokesmen of your betrayal of God and His Law.

*Verse 9.* The Sanctuary of the future will be spared such desecration for all time. Its chambers will never see priests whose lives no longer accord with the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary. The Sanctuary will be closed also to any person in Israel who has set himself in opposition to Judaism. In this manner, the new Sanctuary will comply with the fundamental condition that was laid down in God's Law from the outset and is expressed in the passage **אֲזַם כִּי יִקְרַב מְכֻטָּה וְלֹא כְּלָמֵד לְוַתְּמֵא אָהָת הַטָּמֵר** (Chulin 5).

**10.** But the Levites who became estranged from Me while Israel went astray, who, straying from Me, pursued their abominations—they shall bear their guilt.

**11.** They shall serve my Sanctuary as guards at the gates of the House and minister to the House: they shall slaughter the elevating offering and the meal offering for the people; they shall stand before them, to minister to them.

**12.** Because they minister to them in front of their horrors and thus became a stumbling block of sin for the house of Israel, therefore have I lifted up My Hand (in a vow) regarding them, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God,

ו. כי אסְהָלּוּם אֲשֶׁר רַחֲקָו  
מְעַלִּי בְּתֻחוֹת וִשְׁرָאֵל אֲשֶׁר תַּעֲשֵׂו  
מְעַלִּי אֶתְרַי גָּלוּיָהּ וְגַשְׁׂאֵן  
עוֹנוֹם:

ו. וְרַויּוּ בַמִּקְדָּשׁ מִשְׁרָתִים  
פְּקוּדּוֹת אֱלֹהִים הַבָּיִת  
וּמִשְׁרָתִים אֶת-הַבָּיִת תְּמָה  
יְשַׁחַטוּ אֶת-הַעֲלָה וְאֶת-הַזָּבָח  
לְעַם וְתָמָה יִעֲמֹרוּ לְפָנֵיכֶם  
לְשָׁרֶתֶם:

ל. יְעַן אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁרְטוּ אֶתְכֶם  
לְפָנֵי גָּלוּיָהּ וְתִיוּ לְכִוּת-יִשְׁרָאֵל  
לְמִכְשָׁלָה עַזָּה עַל-כָּן גַּשְׁׂאֵת יְהִי

*Verse 10.* The memory of that tragic era in Jewish history is to be perpetuated by an enactment canceling, in perpetuity, the privileges of the priestly families that had failed to preserve, in their own lives, the Levite spirit during the age of rampant corruption. The priests must look upon themselves as the elite of that tribe whose ancestor had already tended the mighty flame of its collective spirit, that tribe which alone, when all the rest of the nation succumbed to corruption, heeded the rallying call of Moses and, by so doing, became the champion and savior of God's cause among the Jewish people for all time to come (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 22,9). But this is precisely what the priests failed to do when their nation went astray. The present verse is one of the 24 Scriptural passages referring to the priests as "Levites" (לְבִתְהָרָה) who will have to bear the burden of their guilt forever.

*Verses 11–12.* פְּקָדָה, as in II Kings 11,18, "the guard." They are to be assigned only subordinate functions. True, they will be given certain Levite services to perform but, when offerings are brought, they will be assigned only functions such as שְׁחִיתָה which did not necessarily have to be performed by priests.

They had once offered themselves to their nation as willing tools for its defection from God. Now they must help bring about their nation's rebirth by

Who reveals His loving kindness in justice, they shall bear their guilt.

**13.** They shall not approach Me to be priests unto Me, nor to approach the Holy of Holies for all My sanctuaries; they must bear their shame and their abominations that they committed.

**14.** I will appoint them to be keepers of the charge of the House for its entire service, and for everything that must be performed in it.

**15.** \* However, the priests, the Levites, the sons of Zadok who kept the charge of My Sanctuary

\* See M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, פ' אטריך.

עליהם נאם אלני יהוה ונשאו עונם:

ז. ולא יגשו אליו לכהן לי ולגשנות על כל קרשי אל-קרשי הקרים ונשאו כל מחתם ותועבותם אשר אשׁוּ:

ח. ונתתי אותם שמרי משמרות הבית לכל עבדתו וכל אשר יעשה בו פ

ט. והכהנים הלוים בני צדוק אשר שמרו את---משמרות

willingly performing humble services to the ideals symbolized by the rebuilt Sanctuary. On *לטניהם לשוחם* see 46,24.

*Verse 13.* קדשי הקודש may refer to the holy chambers and the ceremonial objects inside them (see Numbers 4,19) which these priests will not be permitted to enter for performing any sacred ritual. They have forfeited this prerogative for all time.

*Verse 14.* They are no longer to be regarded as שמרי משמרות והקרש (this is the term used in Numbers 3,32 to describe the ceremonial functions of the Levites). They are not to be permitted even to perform all the functions assigned to the Levites. They will be allowed only to function as שמרי משמרות הבית (see also Verse 11); i.e., to perform ceremonial duties in the vestibules (see next verse).

*Verse 15.* Not so the true priests; i.e., the descendants of Zadok, the high priest during the reign of King Solomon, or such priests who demonstrated the true Levite spirit, the spirit of Zadok, particularly when the nation had sunk to the lowest stage of corruption. These men will be called by God to serve as בנים in His Sanctuary of the future.

In his commentary on the Haftoroth (פ' אטריך), Mendel Hirsch interprets the verses that follow as new regulations which were not incumbent upon ordinary priests heretofore and many of which were formerly applicable only

when the sons of Israel strayed from Me—they shall approach Me to serve Me; they shall stand before Me, to offer Me fat and blood, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

מקודשו בטעות בני־ישראל  
מעלי הפה וקרבו אליו לשפטני  
וחטפנו לפניהם להקריב לי חלב ודם  
נאם ארני גיהוה:

to the high priest. This view is shared by Malbim (see *ibid.*). According to this interpretation, the priests in this category were now given the prerogative of wearing at all times the white girdle (not, as called for in the Torah, a girdle of white linen into which sky blue, purple and red woolen fibers were interwoven) which the high priest wore only when he performed the <sup>עֲבוּרָה</sup> on the Day of Atonement. The directive in Verse 18, *לא חנכו בrix*, is interpreted to mean that the priests should henceforth no longer gird themselves with warm woollen materials conducive to perspiration. In this view, Verse 20 states that they must henceforth cut their hair in the style worn until then only by the high priest, and Verse 22 imposes upon them, for the first time, certain marital restrictions which until then had been binding only on the high priest; e.g., an ordinary priest could marry the widow of another priest, but not the widow of a Levite or of an ordinary Israelite.

The Sages (*קִירוּשֵׁין ע*) disagree with this interpretation. In their view these verses do not represent new rules. They were part of the Oral Tradition all along but are here set down in writing for the first time by Ezekiel (see *חֲנִינָה י*:). According to the Sages, some of these verses are applicable to the high priest and others to ordinary priests. The intent of the Divine message communicated by the Prophet was simply to emphasize that God would choose the future high priest and the other priests from among the descendants of Zadok. If, then, instead of simply stating that God would henceforth choose His priests from among the Zadokites, Ezekiel singles out from the Law certain regulations that set the high priest apart from ordinary priests, these verses must convey a message of great significance: God expects the priests who had remained loyal to Him and to His Law in the past to continue their painstaking observance of the Divinely-ordained restrictions. Only if they will continue to behave in this manner also in the future will they prove themselves to be true servants of the Sanctuary.

**שְׁמַרְוּ אֶת מְשֻׁמְרָה טְקֻשִׁי**: According to Numbers 3,38, this denotes the essence of the priestly calling. —*להקריב לי וגר*—see Verse 17.

**קִרְבָּנוּ** refers to the services to be performed by the priests at the sacrificial altar.

16. They shall come into My Sanctuary, they who shall approach My table to minister to Me; they shall keep My trust.

17. And it shall come to pass when they enter the gate of the inner forecourt that they shall clothe themselves in linen garments; no wool shall come on them while they minister within the gates of the inner forecourt and further inward.

18. There shall be linen turbans on their heads and linen trousers on their loins; they shall not gird themselves with (or near) anything that causes sweating.

19. When they then go forth into

16. הַמִּזְבֵּחַ יְבֹא אֶל־מִקְדָּשִׁי וְנַפְתַּח  
יְקֻרְבּוּ אֶל־שְׁלָחָנִי לְשַׁרְתָּנִי  
וְשִׁמְרוּ אֶת־טְשִׁဖְּרָתִי:

17. וְהַיָּה בְּכֹאת אֶל־שְׁעָרֵי הַחֲצֵר  
הַפְּנִימִית בְּנֶרֶי פְּשָׁתִים יְלַבְּשׁוּ  
לְאַיִלָּה עַלְיָהֶם צְמָר בְּשַׁרְתָּם  
בְּשְׁעָרֵי הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית וְכֹותָה:

18. פְּאָרֵב פְּשָׁתִים יְהִיוּ עַל־רָאשֵׁם  
וּמְכַנְּפֵי פְּשָׁתִים יְהִיוּ עַל־מִתְגָּנוֹתָם  
לֹא יְחַגְּרוּ בְּנֵיעַ:

19. וּבְצָאתָם אֶל־הַחֲצֵר

*Verse 16.* הַיְלֵן. הַיְלֵן: אל מִקְדָּשִׁי: into the temple. הַיְלֵן: to partake of the offerings (see Malbim). In our opinion, the words שְׁלָחָנִי אֶל מִקְדָּשִׁי, too, refer to these priestly services; a similar turn of phrase in Leviticus 22,9 also refers to the priests' consumption of the offerings. God may well expect that, when they consume the offerings, they will not for one moment lose sight of the sacred calling He has assigned to them (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

*Verses 17–19.* From among them God will also choose the high priests who will perform the sacrifice of Yom Kippur in the Holy of Holies.

*Verse 17.* שְׁעָרֵי denotes the entrances through which the high priest must pass on his way to the Holy of Holies (וביתה).

*Verse 18.* This verse provides a more detailed description of the ceremonial garments worn by the high priest on Yom Kippur. בִּינְעַת: note the difference from the description in the Torah, וּבְאַבְנֵת כְּדֵבֶר. The present verse specifies the part of the body to be encircled by the girdle: "Neither below nor above, but directly over the hip, at the height of the elbow joint" (see גַּחְתָּס תְּמִ). This specification was applicable to all priests, throughout the year. Hence, בִּינְעַת indicates that the girdle should be placed over a part of the body where it stimulates perspiration.

*Verse 19.* This passage is primarily applicable to Yom Kippur (see יְמֵן לְהַלְלָה) but also to the rest of the year (see Chapter 42, Verse 14).

the outer forecourt, into the outer forecourt that leads to the people, they shall take off their clothes in which they minister, and deposit them in the chambers belonging to the Sanctuary and clothe themselves with other garments; they do not sanctify the people with their garments.

**20.** They shall not completely cut off the hair on their heads, but also not allow it to grow wild—they shall carefully trim the hair on their heads.

**21.** No priest may drink wine when they enter the inner forecourt.

**22.** And they may not marry a widow or a divorced woman, but

הַחִיצוֹנָה אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַחִיצוֹנָה  
אֶל-הָעָם יִפְשְׁטוּ אֶת-בְּגָנִירִים  
אֲשֶׁר-הָמָתָה מִשְׁרָתָם בָּם וְהַנִּיחוּ  
אָוֹתָם בְּלֶשֶׁת הַקָּדֵשׁ וְלֶבֶשׁ  
בְּגָנִירִים אַחֲרִים לְאַיְקָרְשׁוּ אֶת-  
הָעָם בְּבָגְנִירִים:

**20.** וְרָאשֵׁם לֹא יִנְלֹחֵז וּפְרִיעָ  
לֹא יִשְׁלֹחֵז קְפּוֹם יִכְסְּכוּ אֶת-  
רְאַשֵּׁיהם:

**21.** וְגַנְוִן לְאַיְשָׁחוּ בְּלִפְנֵן בְּבוֹאָם  
אֶל-הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית:

**22.** וְאַלְמָנָה וְגַרְוָשָׁה לְאַיְקָרְוּ

The admonition implicit in the words **ולא יקדשו** is explained in some detail by Mendel Hirsch in his commentary on the Haftoroth. "The priests themselves must be a sanctuary (**קדש**) (והיו קדש), as it were. Wherever they may be, also outside the Temple, they must exercise a hallowing influence upon the people, not by virtue of their priestly garments but through the impact of their personality, their conduct and the pure and noble example of their own lives." This solemn admonition was symbolized particularly by the **קדושת נתרא** on Yom Kippur, the "final act of sanctification" which the high priest performed at the conclusion of that awesome day before taking off the ceremonial garments he wore in the Sanctuary to enter into the midst of his people in the garments of everyday life (see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 16,4).

**Verse 20.** This verse specifies the manner in which the ordinary priests and the high priest (see סנהדרין כב: סנהדרין כב) were to cut their hair. These rules have the same significance as the regulation which forbids priests to drink wine when they enter the inner forecourt of the Sanctuary and which was already set forth in the Torah (Leviticus 10,19); see סנהדרין שם.

**Verse 22.** The first half of this verse refers to the high priest; the high priest may marry only a widow (On בחולת). The second part refers to ordinary priests; they are permitted to marry a widow. However, the

only virgins from the lineage of the house of Israel; also a widow who is only a widow may marry [one] of the priests.

**23.** They shall teach My people to distinguish between the holy and the profane and teach them to distinguish between the pure and the unclean.

**24.** In a dispute, they (too) shall stand up for the rightful verdict and judge in accordance with My ordinances; and they shall guard My teachings and My statutes at all My appointed times of meeting and turn My Sabbaths into Sanctuaries.

**25.** He may not come near a dead person to defile himself; they may defile themselves only for fa-

לְהַם לְגָשִׁים כִּי אִסְמְכַתָּה  
מֹרֶעֶן בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהַאֲלִמָּה  
אֲשֶׁר תָּהִנָּה אֶלְמָה מִפְנֵן וְקַחְנוּ  
23. וְאֶת־עַמִּי יוּרֹו בַּיּוֹן קָרֵשׁ לְחַלְלָה  
וּבְיוֹנִים לְפָהָר יוֹדָעָם:

24. וְעַל־רַב בְּנֹה וְעַמְרוֹ לְשָׁפֵט  
בְּמִשְׁפְּטֵי וְשִׁפְטוּחוֹ וְאֶת־תּוֹרַתִּי  
וְאֶת־חִקְּתִי בְּכָל־מָעוֹרִי וְשִׁמְרוּ  
וְאֶת־שְׁבָתוֹתִי וְקַרְבָּנוּ:

25. וְאֶל־קַת אַרְם לֹא יָבֹא  
לְטָמֵא כִּי אִסְמְלָאָב וּלְאָמ וּלְבָנָן  
לְמִשְׁפֵט קָרֵי וְשִׁפְטוּחוֹ קָרֵי.

qualification **אשר תהיה אלמנה** is added to emphasize that this does not include widows who have been divorced or have received **niluya**.

*Verses 23–24.* Note the contrast to Chapter 22, Verse 26.

*Verse 23.* See Leviticus 10,10.

*Verse 24.* **על ים:** It was considered a *mitzvah* to coopt also priests into the Sanhedrin if they possessed the necessary qualifications; see Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 17,9. However, the foremost duty of the priests was to see to it that all the **טועדים** on which Israel is to commune with God should be observed by the entire nation in both spirit and practice, and that especially the Sabbath should serve to hallow every aspect of the nation's life and bring every member of the nation closer to God.

*Verse 25.* It is striking that the present verse does not mention the wife among the close relatives for whom a priest may make himself (see Leviticus 21,2). Rabbi S. B. Bamberger **יל**, in his *ספיט מלאת ספיט* (Chapter 1) suggests that, perhaps, even as Jacob in his reply to Esau, **הילדים אשר חוק ונור** (Genesis 33,5), does not specifically mention his wives but seems to include them among his children, so here, too, **ולבת** may include the wife, implying the intimacy of the repetition of the particle **ו**. On the other hand,

ther and mother, and for son and for daughter, for brother and for a sister who has not yet belonged to a man.

**26.** As soon as he turns to his purifications, one shall count seven days for him.

**27.** On the day when he enters the Sanctuary in the inner forecourt, to minister in the Sanctuary, he is to bring near his offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin —thus says my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

if (רטב'ים הל' אבל פ"ב הל' ב', ררכ'יו שם) (דרשה נמורה זו אשוו זו שארו זו אשוו is this problem is eliminated.

**Verse 26.** אחר פרישתו מן המת (מורען קמן טו)—אחרי טהרו: As soon as he has completed the arrangements for the burial of his close relative, the priest starts counting the seven days at the end of which he can return to a state of ritual purity. The fact that the only other case in which Scripture uses the term ימי ספירה is in connection with מצורע implies that there are detailed rules governing also the ritual impurity discussed in the present verses; see ריטב'א קמן שם.

**Verse 27.** וְעַשְׂרֵת הַיּוֹם שֶׁלֹו (מורען קמן טו).—יקריב חטאתו. On the day when they first begin their service, the priests must offer the molah-offering that the high priest offers every day (see Leviticus 6,11 ff.). This offering was to serve them as a forceful reminder that they must not perform their sacred duties in expectation of material gain (Hirsch Commentary, ibid.). As expressly stated in the next verse, their sole possession, their sole inheritance, is none other than God Himself; hence, the vocation to which they must dedicate their whole lives is the consecration of all their material possessions and accomplishments to God. When we consider the stark contrast between these ideal priests of the Sanctuary of the future and the corruption that prevailed among the priestly caste of the Prophet's tragic era, we will understand why Ezekiel uses the term שׁוֹמֵן in referring to the molah-offering to be made by the priests of the future when they first begin their service. Their initial offering should serve them as an impressive reminder to keep away forever from the errors of the past. טם ה' נ: It is God Himself, building His new, everlasting Sanctuary upon the ruins of the old, Who summons them to His service. (These considerations

ולְבַת לְאָח וּלְאֲחוֹת אֲשֶׁר-לָא  
הַיּוֹתָה לְאִישׁ יְטַמֵּא:

26. וְאַחֲרֵי טָהֹרָתָו שְׁבָעַת יְמִים  
יְסִפְרֹזְלָה:

27. וְכִיּוֹם בָּאֹד אַל-הַקְרֵש אֶל-  
הַחֶצֶר הַפְנִימִית לְשִׁרְתָּה בְּקֶרֶש  
יְקַרְבֵּחַטְאָתוֹ נָאָם אַל-נִי יְהוָה:

28. And it shall be to them an inheritance: I am their inheritance; you shall not give them any property in Israel—I am their property.

29. They shall eat the gift of homage and the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, and the guilt offering, and all that is vowed [to the Sanctuary] in Israel shall belong to them.

30. And the first, all first fruits of any kind and all uplifted donations, of all your uplifted donations, shall belong to the priests; and the first of your kneading trough shall you give to the priest to bring a constant blessing to your house.

31. The priest shall not eat anything that has fallen or has been

וְהוּתָה לָהֶם לִנְחַלָּה אֲנִי  
נְחַלְתָּם וְאַחֲזָה לְאִתְתַּנְוּ לָהֶם  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי אַחֲזָתָם:

29. הַמְנַחָה וְהַחֹטֹאת וְהַאֲשָׁם  
הַפָּה יָאַכְלָוּם וְכָל־תְּרֻם בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל  
לָהֶם יְהִי:

30. וְרִאשִׁית כָּל־בָּכְרוּי כָּל וְכָל־  
תְּרוּמָת כָּל סְפִל' תְּרוּמֹתֵיכֶם  
לְפָנָים יְהִי וְרִאשִׁית  
עֲרִսּוֹתֵיכֶם תְּתַנְוּ לְבָנָן לְהַנִּיחָה  
בָּרָכָה אַלְבִּיתָה:

31. כָּל־גְּבֻלָה וְטְרִפָה מִן־

should answer the questions raised in Mendel Hirsch's *Haftoroth* concerning the designation of this offering as *חַלָה*.)

*Verse 28.* See Hirsch Commentary on Numbers 18,20.

*Verse 29.* See Numbers 18, 9 and 14.

*Verse 30.* אַדְשִׁית: This refers not only to חַרְופָה but also to כָּל (Deuteronomy 18,4), כָּל are the first fruits, see כָּל כָּרְדָי כָּל (Numbers 18,13). כָּל תְּרוּמָת הַקְדִּשִּׁים = כָּל תְּרוּמָת כָּל (Numbers 18,19): this term embraces every donation that is sanctified and uplifted to God. The present verse mentions specifically the commandment of taking which, more than any other *challah*, symbolically places every home and every person that dwells therein under the special care and protection of God (hence, probably, the change from the plural כָּל כָּל כָּל to the singular כָּל כָּל כָּל) and makes them all strive to become worthy of the blessings that emanate from the Sanctuary.

*Verse 31.* The preceding verse is logically followed by this solemn admonition to the priests to observe the Divinely-ordained dietary restrictions also in their homes. According to מִתְהוּרָה פָה, this warning against the consumption of *giblah* and *terefah* is particularly appropriate here because the priests are actually

העוף ומון-הבהמה לא יאכלו  
הבהנים: פ

**Chap. 45.** 1. When you allot the land as an inheritance, you shall raise up an uplifted donation to God, a hallowed portion of land twenty-five thousand in length and ten thousand in width; the entire region shall be a hallowed area round about.

מה זבhaftיכם את-הארץ  
בנחלת פירמו תרומה ליהוה  
כראש מדינה ארץ אורך חמשה  
ושערים אלף ארך ורוחב עשרה  
אלף קרש-רווא בכל-גבולה סביב:

commanded, as part of their service in the Sanctuary, to partake of the *דעת* which normally would be נבלה because it had been killed by *טילקה*. The same warning is given in Leviticus 22,8 (see Hirsch Commentary, ibid.).

**Chapter 45, Verse 1.** This is not really the beginning of a new chapter, for the verses that follow are a continuation of the previous chapter. The Word of God now proceeds to discuss yet another *חרומה*, perhaps the most important of all because it is to guarantee that the Jewish land and the Jewish state will cling to God forever and thus remain holy for all time. The spirit of this *חרומה* will erase forever the tragic past of the Jewish nation. One parcel of the Jewish land that will be given to Israel's tribes as their common possession (see Chapter 48) will be offered as a *חרומה* (lit., "uplifted donation") to God (see Fig. ABCD). Let Israel literally receive its land from the hand of God. Even as the sacred levies on its produce and the *חולת* taken from its bread hallow Israel's harvest and nourishment by symbolically making them subordinate to God's will, so, too, let Israel be aware from the very outset that the soil on which it sets foot and of which it takes possession is holy.

**קְרָשׁ הוּא וְגַם:** Though only a portion of this strip has been set aside for the Sanctuary (Verse 2), the entire area will be holy. The spirit in which this *חרומה* is to be made is opposed to the limited concept of "sanctity," confined within the narrow walls of the Temple; see Chapter 43, Verse 12.

**אֶרְךָ:** The repetition of the word *אורך* may have been intended to stress that the other parcels were of the same length (see Verse 6).

**רֹוחַב:** is measured from east to west, and *רֹוחַב* from north to south. *ובהפטיכם:* see Chapter 47, Verses 13 ff. and 22.

יחזקאל מה

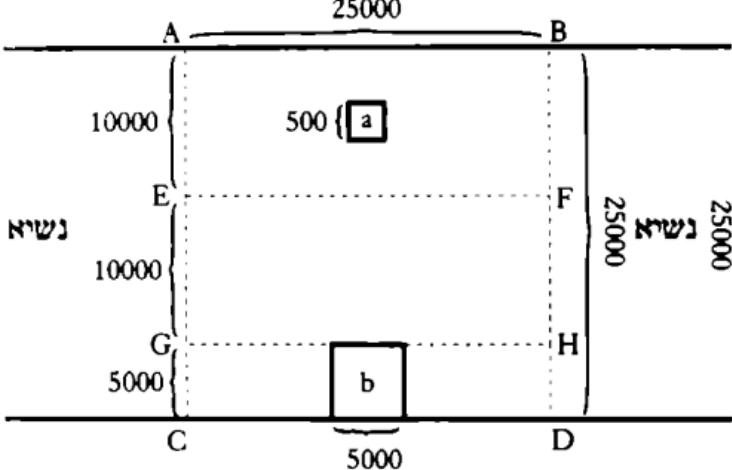
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2. Of this there shall be for the Sanctuary: a square five hundred by five hundred round about, and an open space of fifty cubits it should have round about.

3. According to the measure applied here you shall measure the length of twenty-five thousand and the width of ten thousand—and therein is the Sanctuary, a most holy place.

4. It is a hallowed area of the land, it shall belong to the priests, servants of the Sanctuary who come near in order to serve God; it shall be to them a site for houses and a hallowed site for the Sanctuary.

2. וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ רַבָּשׁ חֲמֵשׁ  
מֵאוֹת בָּחָמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת מִרְבֵּעַ סְכִיבָּה  
וּמִשְׁשִׁים אַמְתָּה מִגְּרָשׁ לֹא סְכִיבָּה:

3. וּמִזְרָחָה מִבְּנָה הַזֹּאת תִּמְדֹר אָרֶךְ  
חֲמֵשׁ וּשְׁשִׁים אַלְפִים וְלִחְבָּב עֲשָׂרָת  
אַלְפִים וּבָרוּחָה נֶמֶקְשׁ קָדֵשׁ  
קָדְשִׁים:

4. קָדֵשׁ פָּרוּחָה אָרֶץ הוּא לְכָהֲנִים  
מִשְׁרָטִי הַמִּקְרָשׁ יְהוָה הַקָּרְבָּן  
לְשָׁרֶת אֲתִידָוָה וְתֵיה לְהַמְּטֻקְּבָּם  
לְבָתִים וּמִקְרָשׁ לְמִקְרָשׁ:

חמשה קרוי.

**Verse 2.** מִגְּרָשׁ: The site reserved for the Sanctuary was to be surrounded by a vacant area 50 cubits wide. For though the entire district was קָדֵשׁ (Verse 1), the Sanctuary itself was קָדְשִׁים (Verse 3) and, even as it did in the wilderness long ago, so here, too, Israel is to encamp "at some distance from and yet within a circumscribed radius "(Numbers 2,2) of the Sanctuary which is to be the center of its life.

**Verse 3.** Verse 1 gives some figures but does not specify a unit of measurement. However, Chapter 42, Verse 16 provides us with the unit of measurement: one כָּנָה is equal to six cubits. The present verse explains that the same unit applies also to the measurements given for the length and width of the parcel constituting the Ḥoromah. Apparently this rather complex clarification was meant to stress the link between the area of the Sanctuary proper and that of the surrounding district. The same purpose is served by the concluding sentence of this verse. וּבָוֹא יְהוָה הַמִּקְרָשׁ: This is the district within which the קָדְשִׁים shall stand as קָדֵשׁ, a holy place from which the surrounding area will receive its sanctity. This is the meaning of קָדְשִׁים; see Chapter 43, Verse 12.

**Verse 4.** This parcel (A B E F) is to be given to the priests, the devoted servants of God's Sanctuary (see Chapter 48, Verse 11). This is the area within which they are to build their homes and, by their personal example, demonstrate the supreme sovereignty of God's Law in their family

5. And (an additional) length of twenty-five thousand and width of ten thousand shall be for the Levites, the servants of the House, as an inheritance: twenty (hallowed) chambers.

6. As for the property of the city, you shall allocate to it a width of five thousand and length of twenty-five thousand, corresponding to the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary; it shall belong to the entire house of Israel.

7. For the prince there shall be (that which is) on either side of the

וְחַמְשָׁה וּשְׁנָתִים אֶלָּפֶן אֶנְךָ  
וּשְׁנָתָר אֶלְפִּים רֹחֵב יְהוָה לְלוּיִם  
קָשָׁרוֹת הַבַּיִת לְהָם לְאַחֲרָה  
עָשָׂרִים לְשָׁכֶת:

וְאַחֲרֹת הַעִיר תִּתְנַצֵּן חַמְשָׁת  
אֶלְפִּים רֹחֵב וְאֶנְךָ חַמְשָׁה  
וּשְׁנָתִים אֶלָּפֶן לְעֵטָת תְּרוּמָת  
הַקָּרֵשׁ לְכָל-בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל וְהִיא:

וְלֹא־שְׁנִיא מִזָּה וּמִזָּה לְתְרוּמָת  
הַיְהּוּדִים:

and communal life so that this district may become a **מִקְרָשׁ**, a place in which the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary are translated into exemplary reality.

*Verse 5.* At the south side (see Chapter 48, Verse 12), directly adjacent to the district reserved for the priests, is the area (E F G H) reserved for the Levites (see Chapter 44, Verse 11). The meaning of **שָׁרִים לְשָׁכָה** is unclear. We suggest the following explanation: In Chapter 48, where this theme is taken up again, the Levites are warned that even though this district has been designated **לְאַחֲרָה**, as their possession, they must always remember that it is, at the same time, **קָדֵשׁ לְהָ** (see Chapter 48, Verse 14). In the same vein, Verse 7 includes their district as part of **הַרּוּמָת הַקָּשָׁת** (see *ibid.*). This may explain why the 20 dwellings which the Levites are to set up in this area are referred to as **לְשָׁכָה**, literally, "chambers of holiness." Even though they are located at some distance from the Sanctuary, the dwelling places of the Levites should be **קָדֵשׁ**.

*Verse 6.* Adjacent to this area, at the south, is the district of the city (G H C D; see Chapter 48, Verse 35). Here, all the rest of Israel were to set up their homes (**לְכָל בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל**) which in turn derived their holiness from **הַקָּרֵשׁ**.

The areas of land described thus far comprised a total space of 25,000 square cubits (A B C D): 10,000 for **חַרְמָת הַקָּרֵשׁ**, 10,000 for the Levite district and 5,000 for the city district.

*Verse 7.* The manner in which the Holy Land is to be divided among the individual tribes is specified in the concluding chapter of this book. Each tribe will be assigned an area extending from the western to the eastern boundary

uplifted donation of the Sanctuary and the property of the city, alongside the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary and alongside the property of the city, from the western side westward and from the eastern side eastward; and the length corresponding to the (length of) one portion that (extends) from the western border to the eastern border.

**8.** As part of the land it shall be his property in Israel; no longer shall My princes offend My peo-

הַקְרֵשׁ וּלְאַחֲרוֹת הָעִיר אֶל-פָנָי  
תְּרוּמַת-הַקְרֵשׁ וּלְאֶל-פָנָי אַחֲרוֹת  
הָעִיר מִפְאָתִים יְמָה וּמִפְאָתָה  
גָּדְרָה גָּדוּמָה וְאֶרֶךְ לְעַמּוֹת  
אַתְּרַת הַמְּלֻקִים מִגְבּוֹלִים אֶל-גָּבוֹלִים  
גָּדוּמָה:

8. לְאָרֶץ וַיהִי־לְוָלְאַחֲרוֹת  
בְּוּשָׂרָאֵל וְלְאִיוֹנוֹ עַד גַּשְ׀יוֹאֵל

of the land. The width of each area will be the same (25,000 cubits), but the length will be determined by the distance between the western and eastern boundaries at that particular point. Among these parcels of land is that one which, as we have already noted from earlier verses, is in turn divided into three smaller parcels with a length of 25,000 cubits each. The remaining land to the east and the west (west of A C and east of B D) belonged to the prince. Thus we know the width of the territory assigned to the prince: it is equal to that of the strips of land apportioned among the tribes. **אֶתְךָ:** The length of this territory, like that of the other parcels of land, is determined by the distance between the western and eastern boundaries of the Holy Land at this particular point.

Under this arrangement, the portion of land set aside for the prince is located on either side of the land reserved for the Sanctuary and of the City of God that derives its own holiness from the Sanctuary. Indeed, it is as if the land reserved for the Sanctuary and the area apportioned for the City of God had been carved out from the portion assigned to the prince (see Chapter 48, Verse 21). Is this not pointedly symbolic of the sphere of activity to which God expects the future kings of the Jewish nation to devote all their time and energy? (See Chapter 44, Verse 3.)

**Verse 8.** The future king of the Jewish nation will be a **מלך** in the true sense of the word (see Chapter 34, Verse 24 and our commentary, *ibid.*). He will even be mindful of the fact that his powers are only lent to him by the people so that he may use them to serve his people and to promote the welfare of his subjects. Under such a **מלך** the territory under his rule will remain **בְּיַהְיָה לוּ לְאַמֹּה** the possession of the land over which he rules. May that same spirit which animated the first Jewish king also inspire all subsequent princes of the Jewish nation. **בְּשָׁמָעָה:** May they always consider themselves as princes raised

ple—they shall give the land to the house of Israel according to its tribes.

9. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: You take too much upon yourselves, princes of Israel: Remove dishonesty and violence, practice righteousness and perform the duties of loving kindness; lift your banishments so that they will no longer burden My people, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

אֶת־צָמִי וְהָאָרֶץ יַתְנוּ לְבִתָּה־  
וּשְׂדָאֵל לְשָׁבְטֵיהֶם ס

ט. כִּי־אָמַר אָרֶן יְהוָה רַب־  
לְכֶם נְשִׂיאִי יִשְׂרָאֵל חַמֵּס וְשֶׁבֶר  
הַסִּירּוֹן מְשֻׁפֶּט וְצִדְקָה עֲשֹׂו הַרְמִימִי  
גְּרַשְׁתִּיכֶם מַעַל עַמִּי נָאֵם אָרֶן  
בָּרוּךְ:

to their station by God in order to carry out God's Will among God's own people. Then the very idea that they might curtail the God-given rights of their people to suit their own selfish ambitions would always be utterly foreign to them.

*Verse 9. ז. ז:* God, Who in His disciplining justice inflicted such a harsh fate on His people, now solemnly warns His princes to shun the evil example set by kings of Israel in the past. It is God Himself Who has called them to their great station. שׁוֹם חַשִּׁים עַל־סְלֵךְ (Deuteronomy 17,15) a Divine commandment that will remain binding upon the people of Israel for all time. But it will be the responsibility of the princes to make certain that they will do nothing to defeat the purpose of this commandment. At the moment they cease to be true פָּשָׁע עַל (עַל), when they forget that they are only servants of God נְשִׂיאִי יִשְׂרָאֵל (נְבּוּאָלָא אַלְקִי יִשְׂרָאֵל—הַרְיוֹת אָ). Rab לְכֶם! The history of the Jewish people, alas, is replete with examples of such reigns and their tragic consequences. We need only read Ezekiel's own description of such tyranny in Chapter 34 of this book. We see the despots "Thrusting the weak out until they have been forced from their pasture" (Chapter 34, Verse 21). These are the acts to which the word בְּרָשְׁתִּיכֶם in the present verse refers. If kings are not to sink to the level of brutal robbers, they must banish from their hearts every last trace of בָּזָן, even the mere thought of dishonesty or lawlessness (see Chapter 7, Verse 11, our notes, ibid.), and they must consider the practice of צְדָקָה and תְּרִיבָה as their foremost function as representatives of God. This is the purpose for which God named them over His nation, and only this gives them the right to reign under God.

**10.** You shall have honest scales, an honest *ephah* and an honest *bat*.

**11.** The *ephah* and the *bat* shall have the same volume: the *bat* shall contain one-tenth of a *chomer*, the *ephah* shall be one-tenth of a *chomer*; the *chomer* shall determine the volume.

**12.** The *shekel* shall be twenty *gerah*; your *maneh* shall be twenty *shekalim*, twenty-five *shekalim* and ten and five *shekalim*.

**13.** This is the uplifted donation that you will have to raise: one-sixth of an *ephah* from a *chomer* of wheat, with the *ephah* divided into six parts of a *chomer* of barley.

10. מְאוֹנִינִי־צַדְקָה וְאִיפְתַּצְדָּקָה  
וּכְתַּצְדָּקָה וְהִי לְכֶם:

11. הַאֲיָفָה וְהַבָּת תְּכֻן אַחֲרָה  
יְהֹוָה לְשָׁאת מַעַשֵּׂר הַחַמֶּר הַבָּת  
וּשְׁוֹרֶת נַחֲלָר הַאֲיָפָה אֶל  
הַחַמֶּר וְהִי מִתְּבָנָתָה  
הַחַמֶּר וְהִי מִתְּבָנָתָה

12. וְהַשְּׁקֵל עֲשָׂרִים גְּרָה עֲשָׂרִים  
שְׁקָלִים חַמֶּשָׁה וְעֲשָׂרִים שְׁקָלִים  
עֲשָׂבָה וְחַמֶּשָׁה שְׁקֵל הַמְּנָה וְהִי  
לְכֶם:

13. זֹאת הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תְּרִימוּ  
שְׁשִׁית הַאֲיָפָה מִתְּקָמָר הַחַטִּים  
וְשְׁשִׁיתָם הַאֲיָפָה מִתְּקָמָר  
הַשְּׁעָרִים:

*Verse 10.* Even as the Torah most emphatically insists on honest weights and measures (Leviticus 19,35 ff.) so, too, the Prophet views the prince of the Jewish people first and foremost as the watchman over scrupulous honesty among his people. Ezekiel lists in detail the weights and measures over which the Jewish prince must keep stringent watch.

*Verse 11.* אִימָה is a dry measure; בָּת is a liquid measure. Both of them represent an equal volume (תְּכֻן, see Chapter 18, Verse 25), i.e., one-tenth of a חַמֶּר (see also Verse 14).

*Verse 12.* The *shekels* are to be minted in four different denominations, 20 שְׁקָלִים, 25 שְׁקָלִים and 5 שְׁקָלִים which together (60 שְׁקָלִים) should equal one מִנָּה.

*Verse 13.* The Prophet now turns his attention to the taxes to be levied by the prince. He describes the tax as a חַרְושָׁה that the prince must turn over to the Sanctuary of God (see Verse 15 ff.). Note the minute detail in which the prince's right to levy taxes is circumscribed: every אִימָה of barley that he receives as a tax from one חַמֶּר must be divided into six equal parts, of which he is permitted to keep only one-sixth for himself.

Since one אִימָה is equal to one-tenth of a חַמֶּר (Verse 11), one-sixth of an אִימָה is equal to one-sixtieth of a חַמֶּר, or the minimum amount set by the Sages for a חַרְושָׁה (see Rashi).

14. And a set portion from the oil: (for this) the *bat* (designated) for the oil; one tenth of this *bat* (taken) from a *kor*—one shall give ten *bat* which are (also) one *chomer*, for ten *bat* equal one *chomer*.

15. And one lamb from the flock, of two hundred, of Israel's richly irrigated (pasture): for the gift of homage, the ascent offering and the meal-of-peace offering, to effect atonement for them, is the pronouncement of My Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

16. All the people of the land

See M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, ש. ה. ז.

14. וְחַקְתָּם הַשְׁמִן הַבְּתֵה הַשְׁמִן  
מַעֲשֵׂר הַבְּתֵה מִן־הַכֶּבֶד עַשְׂרֵת  
הַבְּתִים חָמֵר בַּרְצָשָׂרָת הַבְּתִים  
חַקְרָה:

15. וְשָׂה־אֶחָת מִן־הַצָּאן טָן  
הַפְּאָתָום מִמְשֻׁקָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל לְמִנְחָה  
וְלְעֹלָה וְלְשָׁלָמִים לְכִפּוּר עַל־יְהוָם  
גָּאָם אַרְגָּנוּ יְלֻוָּה:

16. כָּל הָעָם הָאָרֶץ יְהוָה

*Verse 14.* The oil tax (הַבְּתֵה הַשְׁמִן) is measured in *בָּתִים* as mentioned in Verse 11. The tax is to be one-tenth of a *בָּת* since, as we are told at the end of the present verse, כִּי עַשְׂרֵת וּגְרָה. Thus the oil tax amounts to one-hundredth of a *בָּת*. The word *חָמֵר* is added parenthetically to point out that one *בָּת*, a widely-used measure mentioned in the present verse, is equal to one *חָמֵר*; see מִנְחָה עַז. (Thus, 1 *חָמֵר* = 30 *סָאה* = 10 *אִיטָה* = 10 *בָּתִים*). According to Rashi the tax should amount to one whole *בָּת*, which would amount to one *טָן* (tithe) of a *בָּת*.

*Verse 15.* Israel's tribute to its royal shepherd also includes livestock, which he must not keep for himself but must use for making the communal sacrifices on behalf of his people (Verse 17). For the future king of the Jewish nation is only the first servant of God's Sanctuary and, like the most humble among his subjects, he, too, entrusts himself to the care and guidance of God Who is the Shepherd of them all. This spirit protects his subjects from ruthless exploitation and is a guarantee that they will remain in possession of their "good pasture" and their "clear waters," for God "judges between one sheep and the other" (see Chapter 34, Verses 18 ff.). *שָׁקָה* as in Genesis 13,10. However, the Sages (סֹדָם תַּח) interpret *שָׁקָה* שָׁוֹאֵל literally as "drink;" hence, *שָׁקָה* might refer to drink offerings other than oil; i.e., wine for *נְסָכִים* (see Verse 17).

*Verse 16.* כָּל הָעָם הָאָרֶץ יְהוָה: see Chapter 39, Verse 13, our commentary, ibid.

shall be obligated to the prince in Israel with regard to this uplifted donation.

17. [The following] are incumbent upon the prince: the ascent offering, the homage offering and the libation offering on the festivals and on the new moons and on the Sabbaths, on all appointed meeting times of the house of Is-

אל-התקרומה הַזֹּאת לְנִשְׁיא  
בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל:

וְעַל-הַנְּשִׁיא וְהַנֶּה הַעֲלוֹת  
וְהַמְנַחָּה וְהַגְּסָךְ בְּחִנּוּם  
וּבְחֶרְשִׁים וּבְשֻׁבְתּוֹת בְּכָל-  
מוֹעֵדי בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל הוֹא-יַעֲשֵׂה

However, the prince is נִשְׁיא בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל, see Chapter 34, Verse 24, our commentary, ibid.

*Verse 17.* The Prophet now addresses himself to the offerings which (in the view of Mendel Hirsch in his *Haftoroth*, פ' החרשות, an opinion shared entirely by Malbim) were probably meant to be consecration offerings to be brought at the dedication of the future Sanctuary. (See מנתות מה; according to the Talmudic statement טלאוּת הַקְרִיבָה בַּיִסְיָרָא רַשְׁבָּא, the Talmudic statement does not mean to say that when the Second Temple was dedicated, Ezra the Scribe actually brought all the consecration offerings specified by Ezekiel. In making his offerings, Ezra selected only a few of those specified by Ezekiel for the Third Sanctuary, even as the Second Temple edifice included only a few of the architectural features of Ezekiel's blueprint for the Sanctuary of the future which, unlike the Second Temple, would remain for all time.)

Following the eight-day festivities for the consecration of the altar (see Chapter 43, Verses 18 ff.), the actual consecration of the Sanctuary will begin on the first day of the month of Nissan and end with the festival of Sukkoth. During this period of consecration special offerings will be made in keeping with the momentous significance of this event which will mark the beginning of a new phase in the development of Israel and all mankind. The same may apply also to the special daily, Sabbath, New Moon and Festival offerings which are to be brought during this consecration period in addition to those prescribed in the Torah for the ordinary Jewish year (see further Chapter 40, Verses 4–15). Even so, it should come as no surprise that many aspects of these rules and regulations are still unclear and in need of an explanation. Here, if anywhere, we can truly apply the Talmudic saying, "The clarification of this question must await the coming of the Prophet Elijah."

**על נִשְׁיא:** The prince will be responsible for these communal offerings which will be made at the consecration of the future Sanctuary and for which the "uplifted donation" of the people will be used.

rael; he must prepare the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, and the homage offering and the ascent offering and the meal-of-peace offering in order to effect atonement for the house of Israel.

18. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: In the first month, on the first of the month, you shall take a young bullock without blemish and cleanse the Sanctuary from sin.

19. And the priest shall take from the blood of the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, and he shall place it upon the doorpost of the House and on the four corners of the altar's (upper) platform and on the doorposts of the inner forecourt.

20. Thus shall you act during seven (days) of the month because

את־החתפאת ואת־הטנה  
ואת־העולה ואת־השלמים  
לכפר בעוד בית־ישראל: ס

18. כה־אמר אֶלְנִי יְהוָה בְּרָאשׁוֹן  
בַּאֲתָר לְחֶרֶשׁ תְּקֵח פְּרִזְבּוּצָר  
תְּקִים וְחַטָּאת אֶת־המִקְדָּשׁ:

19. וְלֹקַח הַכֹּהֵן מִלּוּמָם הַחֲטָאת וְנָתַן  
אֶל־מִזְבֵּחַ הַבַּיִת וְאֶל־אַרְכָּבָע פְּנִוּת  
הַעֲוֹרָה לְמוֹגֵח וְעַל־מִזְבֵּחַ שְׁעַר  
הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִיקִית:

20. וְכַנְּ תַּעֲשֵׂה בְּשַׁבָּעָה בְּתַחַר

**הה**: While the other offerings will be brought by the priests, the special offerings prescribed in Verses 22–25 must be brought by the prince.

However, on **טביכם**, see our commentary on Chapter 47, Verse 12.

**Verse 18.** As with the Sanctuary of the past, the new Sanctuary that is to endure for all time will stand complete on the first day of Nissan. On that day, after the altar has been cleansed of sin, the Sanctuary itself must be similarly cleansed with the offering specified in the present verse (see Verse 20).

**Verse 19.** Having witnessed **סילוק שכינה**, the sad withdrawal of God's glory forced by the folly and blindness of the people (Chapter 9–10), these same doorposts and that same altar will witness the symbolic acts of consecration with which a purified Israel, in earnest introspection, will make itself worthy of the return of the **שכינה** into its midst: **טהרה השורה**: see Chapter 43, Verse 20.

**Verse 20.** The rebuilt Sanctuary was to be *protected* (this is the literal connotation of **כְּפָרָה**, "to cover up;" see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 29,36) **טהור** from the prejudice, superficiality and obtuseness of men caught up in spiritual error (**שְׁגָגָה**) or subject to subversive influences because

of the man who has erred and for the man who is foolish and effect atonement for the House.

**21.** In the first [month], on the fourteenth [day] of the month, you shall have the Pesach, a festival of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten.

**22.** And on that day the prince shall prepare for himself and for all the people of the land a bullock as an offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin.

**23.** During the seven days of the festival he shall prepare each

מְאִישׁ שָׁנָה וּמְפַתֵּח וּכְפֹרְתָּם  
אֶת-הַבּוּכָה:

**21.** בְּרִאשָׁון בְּאַרְכָּבָעָה עֲשֵׂר יוֹם  
לְחֶרֶשׁ וְרִנְגָּה לְכֶם הַפֵּסֶחׁ תְּנַחַ  
שְׁבֻעָות יְמִים מִצּוֹת יְאָכֵל:

**22.** מַעַשָּׂה הַנְּשִׂיא בַּיּוֹם הַרוֹא  
בְּעָדוֹ וּבְעָרָבָה לְלַעַם הָאָרֶץ טָרֵךְ  
חַטָּאת:

**23.** וְשְׁבֻעָות יְמִידְחָנָן יְעַשָּׂה

of their moral weakness (**מִתְּחִילָה**), who could weaken and distort the moral ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary.

This "House" shall remain forever, in absolute purity, the **מקדש** (Verse 18), the dwelling place of the Divine ideal of life.

On the meaning of **שָׁנָה** and **מִתְּחִילָה** see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 8,1 and 9,27.

**Verses 21–22.** These two verses refer to the special offering to be brought on that fourteenth day of Nissan when, for the first time in the new Sanctuary, the individual members of the Jewish people will offer up the Passover lamb as a symbol of their allegiance and submission to the guidance of God, the Shepherd of their lives. Like all other consecration offerings, this consecration offering, too, has an eloquent message for us, as pointed out in the Hirsch Commentary to the relevant passages. "The prince, as the representative of the community and of each and every one of its members, must bring on their behalf, a **טָרֵךְ**, a young bull, as a sin offering. He is to come before God not as **שָׁנָה**, as it were, the symbol of passive surrender to fate, but as **טָרֵךְ**, the muscular, mighty laborer that tills the soil of mankind in the service of God." The **טָרֵךְ** he offers is a **מְתַבֵּל**, "expressing in symbolic terms his admission that he has not yet attained the moral level for which he is destined and his solemn pledge to achieve and maintain this ideal henceforth."

**Verse 23.** The consecration offerings prescribed for the first Passover in the new Sanctuary must be repeated by the prince on the seven days of Sukkoth which end the season of consecration (Verse 25).

day as an ascent offering to God, seven bullocks and seven rams, without blemish, throughout the seven days, and every day one he-goat as an offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin.

24. And as an homage offering he shall prepare one *ephah* for the bullock and one *ephah* for the ram, and for every *ephah* one *hin* of oil.

עולה ליהוה שבעת פָּרִים  
ושבעת אילים תפיסם ליום  
שבעת הימים וחמשת שער  
עוויום ליום:

וְמִנְחָה אַיִלָּה לְפָרָן וְאַיִלָּה לְאַיִלָּה  
יְעַשֵּׂה וְשָׁקַן הַיּוֹם לְאַיִלָּה:

First, seven young bullocks must be offered; these serve as symbolic expressions of our joyous resolve to keep striving vigorously forward and upward to achieve the moral and spiritual objectives set for us by God. "There must be a symbolic connection between the שְׂעִירִים to be offered by the prince, which must be seven in number, and the seven שָׁרִים which, according to Numbers 29,34, must be brought on the seventh day of Sukkoth. The latter symbolizes the constantly diminishing contrast between the non-Jewish and the Jewish world as a goal yet to be achieved. The former will proclaim that this yearned-for dawn of all mankind, of humanity's return to God, has come at last."

Added to these are seven rams as ascent offerings. "In Scriptural passages dealing with the offerings, לֵב always symbolizes a personality that is richly blessed with energy and resources and that moves ahead of all the others as their leader. In the ascent offering, לֵב expresses the high resolve to use one's God-given resources, energies, power and influence solely to "nourish the flames of God's fire on earth," and as לְהַגְּדָה נִזְמָנָה for "the realization of the will of God." Hence these offerings have a solemn message for the leading personalities in Israel as well as for all mankind, united with Israel through the spirit expressed in symbolic terms by the number (seven) of rams offered.

The שׁוֹבֵעַ which is then brought as an offering that cleanses him who brings it of sin represents a warning against a sense of false security and a vow to offer firm and resolute resistance to all the diverting and corrupting influences which Israel may encounter at this new stage in its history.

**Verse 24.** The quantities of flour and oil prescribed for the **נִזְבָּח** accompanying the above offerings are far larger than those usually prescribed by the Torah. They express, in symbolic terms, the promises contained both in the Torah and in the messages of the Prophets that the moral and spiritual rebirth of Israel and the rest of mankind will be accompanied by an extraordinary surge of physical flowering and material prosperity. The **נְזֵבָה** vows to employ

**25.** In the seventh {month}, on the fifteenth day of the month, on the festival, he shall prepare like these during the seven days, with regard to the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin, as well as the ascent offering, the gift of homage and the oil.

**Chap. 46.** 1. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: The gate of the inner forecourt facing east shall remain closed during the six working days; on the Sabbath day, however, it shall be opened and also on the day of the new moon shall it be opened.

2. And the prince shall enter through the forecourt of the gate from outside, and he shall remain standing at the post of the door; the priests shall then perform his elevating offering and meal-of-peace offering; he shall prostrate himself at the threshold of the gate and leave; the gate shall not be closed until the evening.

3. (For) the people of the land

25. בַּשְׁבּוּעַי בְּחַמֶּשֶׁה עֲשֵׂר יוֹם  
לְהַרְשֵׁנָה בְּחַנּוֹן יְצַשָּׂה כְּאֶלָּה שְׁבֻעַת  
הַיּוֹםִים כְּחַטָּאת כְּעַלְהָ וּכְמִנְחָה  
וּכְשָׁמְנוֹן: ס

מו ו' כִּי־אָמַר אֱלֹהִי יְהוָה שַׁעַר  
הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית הַפְּנִיקְרִים וְיִהְיֶה  
סְנוּר שָׁשָׁת יְכַפֵּר הַמִּשְׁמָה וּבְיוֹם  
הַשְׁבָּת יִפְתַּח וּבְיוֹם הַחֲרֵש יִפְתַּח:

ז' זָבָא הַנְּשִׂיא רַדְךָ אַיִלָּם  
הַשַּׁעַר מְחוֹזָן וְצַמְרָר עַל־מִזְוֹעַת  
הַשַּׁעַר וְצַבְשָׂו הַכְּהָנִים אֶת־צְעוֹלָתוֹ  
וְאֶת־שְׁלָמָיו וְהַשְׁתְּחִווָּה עַל־מִפְּתָן  
הַשְׁעָר וְזָאָה אַשְׁעָר לְאַדִּיסְגָּר עַד־  
הַעֲרָבָה:

ט' וְהַשְׁתְּחִווָּה עַמְּקָרָץ פָּתָח

these riches only as *לְתַת אֱשָׁה לְהִ*, for the realization of God's will and for purposes that will meet with God's approval (see M. Hirsch, *Haftoroth*, ibid.).

**Chapter 46.** The instructions contained in this chapter, too, may apply primarily to the season of consecration extending from Pessach until Sukkoth (see Malbim), but this does not rule out the possibility that some of these are of permanent, binding character.

**Verse 1–3.** שַׁעַר הַמִּזְבֵּחַ is probably not identical with שַׁעַר הַחֲצֵר הַפְּנִימִית of Chapter 44, Verse 1, especially in view of the fact that the latter, unlike the former, was to remain permanently locked (see ibid.). The reference is

shall (also) prostrate themselves before God at the entrance of the gate on the Sabbaths and on the new moons.

4. As for the elevating offering which the prince shall bring near to God: on the Sabbath day, six sheep without blemish and one ram, without blemish.

השער ההוא בשבות  
ובחרשים לפניו והזה:

וְרֹאשׁוֹת אֲשֶׁר־יִקְרַב הַנּוֹי  
לִירֹאָה בְּיוֹם הַשְׁבָּת שְׁשָׁה כְּבָשִׂים  
תָּמִיכָם וְאֶלְעָזֵל תָּמִימִים:

most likely to the east gate leading to the **צִורָה**. That gate is accorded special importance for the season of consecration, or perhaps even for all time. It was in the entryway of this gate that the Prophet had once beheld 25 leaders, among them princes of the people, who had shamelessly abused their authority and had torn asunder the bond that should have bound the Jewish people and the Jewish state to God forever (see our notes on Chapter 11).

This gate is henceforth to remain open only for the true prince so that, standing by his doorpost, he may be able to follow with due attention and devotion the sacrificial rites performed by the priests on his behalf (Verse 12). But on the Sabbath and on the New Moon, the days on which, in the words of Isaiah (66,23), "all flesh shall come לְהַשְׁתַּחוּ לִפְנֵי to bow down before Me," this gate will open. After the prince, following the completion of the sacrificial rites, has rendered homage to God at the threshold of this gate, he is to summon the entire nation to emulate him in subordinating their whole existence to the life-governing Law of God (Verse 3). The significance of the "doorpost and the threshold" also in this passage is obvious (see Chapter 43, Verse 11).

**Verse 4.** It would seem apparent that the offerings prescribed for the Sabbath and the New Moon (Verse 6), differing as they do from the offerings prescribed in the Torah for these days, are also applicable to the season of consecration (between Pessach and Sukkoth). This is clear also from the stress placed on the fact that these offerings had to be brought by the prince or, more accurately, on his behalf (since קְלִילָה in Verse 4 probably refers to in Verse 2). However, see Verse 6.

At the entryway to this gate, where princes once arrogantly declared their independence from God, saying "it (i.e., Jerusalem) is the cauldron and we are the flesh" (Chapter 11, Verse 3), the true **רְאֵשׁ**, leading his people by his own good example (**אֶלְעָזֵל**), subordinates every aspect of his physical and sensual life (as symbolized by the number six corresponding to the six days of creation) to the guidance of God, the Shepherd of his existence.

5. And as a gift of homage one *ephah* for the ram, and for the sheep a gift of homage according to his means, and of oil: one *hin* to an *ephah*.

6. On the day of the new moon: a young bullock from among the ones without blemish and six sheep and a ram, they shall be without blemish.

7. And he shall present as a gift of homage one *ephah* for the bullock and one *ephah* for the ram, but for the sheep, oil according to his means: one *hin* to an *ephah*.

8. Whenever the prince shall enter, he shall enter through the forecourt of the gate and leave by the same way.

9. When the people of the land

5. וּמִנְחָה אַיִלָה לְאַיִל וּלְכְבָשִׂים  
מִנְחָה מִתְּפָתֵת יָגֹר וּשְׁמָן הַיּוֹן לְאַיִלָה:

6. וּכְיוֹם הַחֲדֵשׁ פָּר בּוֹדְבָּךְ  
תָּמִימָם וְשֶׁשָׁת כְּבָשָׂם וְאַיִל  
תָּמִימָם יְהִוָה:

7. וְאַיִלָה לְפָר וְאַיִלָה לְאַיִל יְעַשֵּׂה  
מִנְחָה וּלְכְבָשִׂים כְּאַשְׁר תְּשִׁיבֵן  
יָגֹר וּשְׁמָן הַיּוֹן לְאַיִלָה:

8. וּבְכֹוא הַנְּשָׂיא נְרֵך אֲוָלָם  
הַשְׁעָר יָכֹוא וּבְרֵרֶךְ יָצָא:

9. וּבְכֹוא עַמְּדָה אָרֶץ לְפָנֵי וּלְזָהָה

*Verse 5.* See Chapter 45, Verse 24. מִנְחָה מִתְּחֵת יָדו or, as in Verse 7, "according to his means." Thus, no specific measure has been prescribed for the offering which he is to offer along with his ascent offering of בְּנִים. This lack of specifications may convey the thought that the prince is expected to submit trustingly to God's guidance (as symbolized by שְׁמָן), irrespective of the material goods with which he has been endowed.

*Verse 6.* The Sages (מָנוֹת טה.) interpret this verse as a supplement to the instructions for the Mussaph offering of Rosh Chodesh prescribed in the Torah (Numbers 28,11), i.e., that the offering is acceptable even if only one bullock instead of the prescribed two, or only six (or fewer) sheep instead of the prescribed seven, are available. This would explain the specification זֶה בְּן תָּמִימָם which otherwise would sound odd: in case of emergency, one of the unblemished bullocks specified by the law would be considered sufficient (דָּרְךָ).

*Verse 8.* The way through the east gate is the way of the princes. The lofty ideals and high resolves that move the prince when he enters remain with him when he leaves. His position requires that he stand on guard at the doorposts of the Sanctuary's east gate; see Chapter 40, Verse 16.

*Verse 9.* This verse lays down the route to be followed by the people

shall come before God at the appointed meeting times, then he who entered through the north gate in order to prostrate himself shall leave through the south gate, and he who entered through the south gate shall leave through the north gate; he must not return by way of the gate through which he entered but must leave through the one opposite.

**10.** The prince shall (then) also enter in their midst, where they shall enter; when they leave they shall leave (together).

**11.** And on the festivals and the appointed meeting times the gift of homage shall consist of one *ephah* for the bullock and one *ephah* for

בְּמַעֲדָרִים הַבָּא דֶּרֶךְ שַׁעַר צְפֹן  
לְהַשְׁתַּחַווֹת יֵצֵא דֶּרֶךְ-שַׁעַר נֶגֶב  
וְהַבָּא דֶּרֶךְ-שַׁעַר נֶגֶב יֵצֵא דֶּרֶךְ  
שַׁעַר צְפֹנָה לֹא יִשּׂוּב בֶּרֶךְ  
הַשַּׁעַר אֲשֶׁר-בָּא בּוֹ כִּי נֶכְחָוֹ  
יֵצָאוּ:

10. וְהַנְּשָׂיא בְּתוֹךְ בְּכוֹאָם יָבוֹא  
וּבְצָאתָם יֵצָאוּ:

11. וּבְחַנִּים וּבְמַעֲדָרִים תְּהִנֵּה  
הַמְנֻחה אִיפָּה לְפָרָא אִיפָּה לְאַיִל  
צָא קָרִי.

through the Sanctuary on the days when God invites them to commune with Him there. The people must pass through both the north and the south gates. Assuming that these gates (much like the sides of the altar, see Hirsch Commentary, Leviticus 1,5) take their symbolic meaning from the Table at the north side and the Menorah at the south of the Sanctuary (see Chapter 8, Verses 1–3), then in an identical manner the north gate leads to the subordination and consecration of the material and sensual aspects of life to the Law of God, while the path through the south gate enables the mind and the spirit to receive enlightenment from the Word of God. Together, these high resolves to be gained in the Sanctuary are the basic preconditions for true communion with God.

**Verse 10.** In view of what we have been told about the future princes of the Jewish nation, it is only natural that the place of the prince of the Jewish nation should be in the very midst of his people. It is in the midst of his subjects that he must open his heart and mind to the truths offered by the Sanctuary so that, together with his people, he may go forth to translate these truths into reality in daily life (וְגַזְעָתָם יָמֹא). For the מִשְׁנָה is indeed called מִשְׁנָה (Chapter 34, Verse 24).

**Verse 11.** This verse specifies the מנחה offerings that must be added to the

the ram, but for the sheep a gift that is according to his means and as for oil: one *hin* for the *ephah*.

**12.** However, when the prince performs a consecration—an ascent offering or meal-of-peace offering as a consecration to God—one shall open for him the gate facing east, and he shall make his ascent offering and meal-of-peace offering as he does on the Sabbath day; then he shall leave and the gate shall be closed after he has left.

**13.** Every day shall you make a year-old sheep without blemish as an ascent offering, every morning shall you make it.

**14.** And you shall offer with it every morning as a gift of homage one sixth of an *ephah* and one third of a *hin* of oil to stir in the fine flour. The continual gift of homage to be presented to God (must be made) according to the perpetual ordinances;

**15.** They shall offer the sheep

ולכּבּשׂוֹם מִתְתַּת יְרוּשָׁמָן הַיִם  
לְאַיִלָּה: ס

12. וכִּרְיוֹנֶשֶׁה הַנְּשִׁיא נְרַבָּה עוֹלָה  
אוֹדְשָׁלְמִים נְרַכָּה לִיהְוָה וּפְתַח לְזָה  
אַת הַשְׁעָר הַפְּנֵה קְרִים וְעַשָּׂה  
אַת־עַלְתוֹ וְאַת־שְׁלָמִיו בְּאַשְׁדָּר  
יְעַשָּׂה בְּיוֹם הַשְׁבַּת וְנִצְא וְסִנְר  
אַת־הַשְׁעָר אֲפָרִי צָאתָה:

13. וְכָבֵש בְּנֵדְשָׁנְתָה תְּמִים תְּעַשָּׂה  
עוֹלָה לִיּוֹם לִיהְוָה בְּבָקָר בְּבָקָר  
תְּעַשָּׂה אַתָּה:

14. וּמְנֻחָה תְּעַשָּׂה עַלְיוֹ בְּבָקָר  
בְּבָקָר שְׁשִׁית הַאַיִל וְשָׁמְן  
שְׁלִישִׁית הַהִין לְרַם אַת־הַסְּלָל  
מְנֻחָה לִיהְוָה חֲקֹות עַלְם תְּמִידָה:

15. וְעַשְׂו אַת־הַכְּבָש וְאַת־  
עַשְׂו קָרִי.

regular offerings on **חִנִּים** (Shevuoth) and **יּוֹם טוּרִים** (Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur) during the season of consecration (see Malbim and *מדרש רוי*).

*Verse 12.* See Verses 1–3.

*Verse 13.* During the season of consecration the daily **חַטָּאת** offering prescribed in the Torah are to be augmented by a special offering that is to express in heightened measure our submission to God's guidance for all time. These are the days of consecration when God's work of redemption, which began in Egypt and of which Israel had to make itself worthy anew each day through its **חַטָּאת** offering, has brought the dawn of a most glorious morning to Israel and all mankind. Therefore: **בְּבָקָר עַשְׂו** **אַת**.

**תְּעַשָּׂה:** on behalf of the entire nation, as in Chapter 45, Verse 18.

*Verses 14–15.* The quantity of the additional offering **מְנֻחָה** the **אַיִלָּה**

and the gift of homage and the oil each morning as a perpetual ascent offering.

**16.** Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice: If the prince gives a present to one of his sons, it is his inheritance and shall remain with his sons: it is their possession as an inheritance.

**17.** If, however, he gives a gift of some part of his inheritance to one of his servants, it remains with [the latter] until the year of liberty and then it shall revert to the prince: but his inheritance shall belong only to his sons.

**18.** The prince must not take from the inheritance of the people

הפונחה ואת-השְׁמָן בְּנֵךְ בְּלֶכְר  
עלות תכניות: פ

**16.** בְּהַאֲפָר אַרְנִי יְהוָה כָּי  
וַיְתַן הַגְּשִׁיא מִתְּנָה לְאִישׁ כְּבָנָיו  
נְחַלְתּוּ הַיָּא לְבָנָיו תְּהִיה אֲחֹזָתָם  
הַיָּא בְּנָחָלה:

**17.** וְכִירְיוֹן מִתְּנָה מִנְחָלוֹת לְאֶחָר  
מְעַבְּרוּ וְהִיְתָה לוּ עַד-שְׁנִית  
הַרְרוֹר וְשָׁבַת לְגַשְׁיא אֶיךָ נְחַלְתּוּ  
בָנָיו לְהָם תְּהִיה:

**18.** לֹא-יָקַח הַגְּשִׁיא סִנְחָלָת

is equal to that of the "uplifted donation" to be offered by each individual (cf. Chapter 45, Verse 13). The measure of oil (as the symbol of prosperity) prescribed for this offering is generous (cf. Chapter 45, Verse 24), so that the flour should be thoroughly saturated with the oil (סְסִים, רְסִים, "a drop," Song of Songs 5,2).

Note, however, (מצורח דוד) that the additional morning חטיד offering to be made during the season of consecration does not in any manner alter the instructions given in the Torah for צוות חטיד; the latter are binding for all time.

There now follow two instructions that spell out significant principles for the kings and the priests of Israel, respectively.

**Verses 16–18.** The king's control over his land is expressly limited to the inheritance that has come down to him from his ancestors (see Chapter 45, Verse 7). He has the right to give it away to his sons during his lifetime. Gifts made by the king to strangers revert to him during the year of שנת הדרכו (Yovel) so that his property will eventually go to his direct heirs intact. In this ideal state the message of the בָּل, "The land is God's; you are only strangers with Me" (Leviticus 25,23), reaches even the richest and most powerful in the land. (Note the use of the term שְׁבָת instead of שְׁבָתָה, suggestive of the Sabbath year for the land). In this manner God guarantees even to

and injure them by infringing upon their property; only from his own property can he give inheritance to his sons so that no member of My people will be pushed aside, no one deprived of his property.

**19.** Then he led me through the passage which is at the side of the gate to the chamber hallowed to the priests which faces north and, behold, there was a room at the back side at the west.

**20.** He said to me: This is the room where the priests shall cook the guilt offering and the offering that cleanses him who brings it from sin and where they shall

הַעַם לְהוֹנְגָתָם מִאֲחִזָּתָם מִאֲחִזָּתוֹ  
יַנְחֵל אֶת־בְּגָנוֹ לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לَا  
יַפְצֹץ עַמִּי אִישׁ מִאֲחִזָּתוֹ

19. וּבְבוֹיאָנִי בַּמְבוֹא אֲשֶׁר עַל־כְּתָף  
הַשְׁעָר אֶל־הַלְּשָׁכּוֹת הַקָּדְשָׁ אֶל־  
הַכְּהֻנִּים הַפְּנִוּת אַפְּנָה וְהַנְּדָשָׁם  
מָקוֹם בִּירְכַּת סִימָה: ס

20. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים זֶה הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר  
יִשְׁלֹחֵם הַכְּהֻנִּים אֶת־הָאָשָׁם  
וְאֶת־הַחֲטֹאת אֲשֶׁר יָפֹרֵא אֶת־

ברכותם קרי.

the poorest and the humblest the right to enjoy his possessions unafraid. Since God has said **אִישׁ אָל אֲחֹדו** (ibid. 10), no king will dare to drive any member of God's nation (**עַמּוֹ**): cf. Chapter 34, Verse 21.

**Verse 19.** The Prophet had received the above instructions from God within the north gate of the inner forecourt (Chapter 44, Verse 4). Now he was conducted from the gate through the "passage" (Chapter 42, Verse 4) which leads to the chambers located to the north of the Sanctuary. The Prophet had already been told (see Chapter 42, Verse 13) that the priests were to consume the **קָדְשִׁים** in these chambers. Now he was shown, in one of these chambers, a room set aside for the cooking and the baking of these **קָדְשִׁים**.

**Verse 20.** This admonition is addressed to the priests: **לְיִסְתַּחַם** must be cooked inside the **בָּיִת** and must not be allowed to leave the Sanctuary area for even one moment. This reminder of the relevant law in the Torah was particularly appropriate here because, in the chapters immediately preceding, the priests of the future Sanctuary had been called upon to consider the hallowing of the whole nation as their foremost duty. What better way, one might have thought, for the priests to achieve this goal than by stepping out into the midst of the people, bearing the sacred offerings in their hands for all the people to see?

However, the ceremonies and rituals of the Sanctuary are determined by

bake the gift of homage which, however, must not be carried out into the outer forecourt to sanctify the people (thereby).

21. Then he led me out to the outer forecourt and made me go to the four corners of that court and, behold, [there was] a court in the corner of [every] court, a court in the corner of the courtyard.

22. At the four corners of the court there were enclosures forty long and thirty wide, from which the smoke could rise, one measurement for the four (courts) assigned to the corners;

23. A row (of masonry) was round about, in them around the four of them, and ovens for cooking were installed beneath the rows all around.

24. And he said to me: This

המגנְחָה לְכַלְתִּי הַוֹּצִיא אֶל־הַחֲצֵר  
הַחִיצוֹנָה לְקַרְבֵּן אֶת־הַעַם:

וְיַוְצִיא אֶל־הַחֲצֵר הַחִיצְנָה  
וַיַּעֲבְרֵנִי אֶל־אַרְבָּעָתָ מִקְצָעָ  
הַחֲצֵר וְהִנֵּה חָצֵר בַּמִּקְצָעָ הַחֲצֵר  
חָצֵר בַּמִּקְצָעָ הַחֲצֵר:

22. בַּאֲרָבָעָתָ מִקְצָעָתָ הַחֲצֵר  
חָצְרוֹת קְסֻרוֹת אַרְבָּעִים אַדְךָ  
וּשְׁלֹשִׁים רַחֲבָ מִנְהָ אַחַת  
לְאַרְבָּעָתָ מִקְצָעָתָ:

23. וּטוֹר סְבִיב בָּהָם סְבִיב  
לְאַרְבָּעָתָם וּמִבְשָׁלוֹת עֲשֵׂי  
מִתְחַת הַטִּירּוֹת סְבִיב:

24. וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהֶ בֵּית בֵּית

the Law of God; there is no room for subjective innovations in the Sanctuary of God's Law. Let the priests of the future Sanctuary take this warning to heart lest the consecration of the Sanctuary built to endure forever should end in catastrophe as did the dedication of the Tabernacle in the wilderness [when Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, perished because they had offered fires not commanded by God]. God's Law reigns supreme in His Sanctuary. Therefore the priests can truly begin the work of hallowing His people only by transforming God's will into living reality in Israel's midst; see also Chapter 44, Verse 19.

*Verses 21–23.* In the four corners of the outer forecourt the Prophet noted enclosed areas [35], small courts, קְסֻרוֹת אַחֲרָיָה which, as the Sages explain (סְדוּת ב' ה), had been left without a roof (שָׁאַיָּן טְקוּרָה) to allow the smoke to escape. Rows of stones formed a low platform parallel to the walls, with indentations for the placement of the pots. Underneath this platform ovens were installed.

*Verse 24.* These were the courtyards set aside for the preparation of the קְדָשִׁי קְלִים that could be consumed outside the chambers of the Sanctuary and

is the house for those who cook, where the servants of the house shall cook the sacrificial meal of the people.

**Chap. 47.** 1. Then he led me back to the entrance of the House and behold, waters flowed from

הַמְבָשְׁלִים אֲשֶׁר יַבְשְׁלֹוּשָׂם  
מִשְׁרָתֵי הַבַּיִת אֲתִיזְבֵּחַ הַעַם:

מו' וַיַּשְׁבַּנְיָה אֶל-פֻתָּח הַבַּיִת  
וְהַנְּהָרִים יַצְאִים מִתְחַת מִפְתָּח

could therefore also be cooked outside the **עֹזֶרֶת**. As a consequence, these sacred offerings served to carry the spirit and the sanctity of the Temple out into the world; they were thus a symbolic bridge between the Sanctuary and the home, between the altar and the family table. The fact that these sacred foods could be consumed at the family table but had to be prepared on the "Mountain of the Sanctuary" made them fit to serve the realization of those God-ordained ideals on which the survival of this future Sanctuary, too, will depend. Thus, the reference to the enclosures set aside for the preparation of the sacred offerings that are to be taken out from the Sanctuary is logically linked with the solemn admonition with which these chapters opened (Chapter 43, Verses 8–12).

These enclosed areas were located at the outermost corners of the outer forecourt. Note, the dots atop each consonant of **טָהָרָתָוֹת** ("corners"). Perhaps this vocalization is intended to stress that these corners should be regarded not as the outermost boundary of the Temple area but as the points from which the spirit symbolized by the Sanctuary spreads to all the four corners of the earth.

**טוֹרְתֵי הַבַּיִת**, see Chapter 44, Verse 11. Precisely those who in their own lives had once shown such a tragic lack of understanding for the ideals symbolized by the Sanctuary are now to assist Israel in the preparation of the sacrificial meal.

**Chapter 47.** The Sanctuary now stands complete. The glory of God has taken possession of it. "Standing before the Master of all the earth" (Zechariah 4,14), king and priests await His Word so that they may implement it in the daily lives of His people. The task at hand is now to prepare the ground upon which the will of God is to be realized. Israel is to receive its land again. At this point, of course, that land is still a barren wilderness; its waters, saturated with salt, cannot yet sustain life. "Sulfur and salt, all the soil is burned up; the ground is not sown and permits nothing to grow; no vegetation rises from it, [it is] as in the devastation of Sodom and Gomorrah" (Deuteronomy 29,22).

under the threshold of the House, eastward, for the front of the House faced east, and the waters flow from beneath the right side of the House, south of the altar.

2. He made me go out on the way through the north gate and made me walk about from outside to the outer gate which faced east and, behold, water gushing forth from the right side.

3. And as the man, with the measuring line in his hand, walked

הַבּוֹתֶר קָרוּמָה כִּירְפֵּנִי הַבָּיִת  
קָרְבָּנִים וּמְפָאִים וּדְרִים מִתְחַת  
מִפְּתַח הַבָּיִת תְּוֹמְנִית מִגְּבָּר  
לְמוֹבוֹת:

2. וַיַּצְאָנִי דֶּרֶךְ שַׁעַר צְפֹנָה  
וַיַּסְבְּנִי בָּרֶךְ חֹזֶן אֶל-שַׁעַר הַחוֹזֶן  
בָּרֶךְ הַפּוֹנֶה קָרְבָּנִים וּהַגְּדָרִים  
מִפְּכָים מִזְרָחְתָּף הַיּוֹמָנִית:

3. בְּצָאת-הָאֵישׁ קָרְבָּנִים וְקָרְבָּנוֹת

However, Israel is now ready to resume possession of its land. יְרוּן מַרְשָׁן "בַּיּוֹם יְדוֹקָן" "They satisfy themselves from the abundance of Your House, נָנוּל צְדָקָה and You make them drink from the river of Your delights. כִּי עַמְקָם מִקְרָא חַיִם for with You is the fountain of life" (Psalms 36, 9–10). The life-giving waters of this river and this fountain come to Israel from the Sanctuary of its God (cf. Joel 4,18; Zechariah 13,1; 14,8). This river also makes "her wilderness like Eden and her desert like a garden of God" (Isaiah 51,3). The Prophet is given to behold all this in a wondrous vision.

*Verse 1.* Waters flow from beneath the threshold of the house, הַיכָּל and thence toward the right, the side of the Sanctuary on which the menorah is located (see Chapter 46, Verse 9), then past the south side of the altar toward the east. For it was from the east that the glory of God held its entry into the Sanctuary (Chapter 43, Verse 2). And now the spirit of God flows forth to perform its wondrous work.

*Verse 2.* The Prophet had to take this roundabout route because the eastern gate should be closed (Chapter 46, Verse 1). Or was this meant to demonstrate, in symbolic terms, that man could follow the spirit of God which emanated from the south side (טֻבָּה) only by way of the north side (לְשָׁלוֹן) of the Sanctuary, the שְׁלֹחַ symbolizing God's wish that man subordinate all the material and sensual aspects of his life to God's Law (see Chapter 46, Verse 9)?

**טְפָכִים:** In the meantime the quantities of flowing water had increased; they gushed forth from their source as if from a jug (**מֶגֶד**).

*Verses 3–5.* The further away the waters flowed from the Sanctuary, the more they increased in volume so that anyone wishing to pass through them was forced to surrender completely to them. For this is the connotation of

eastward, he measured a thousand cubits and made me walk through the water; water up to the ankles.

**4.** He measured (another) one thousand cubits and made me walk through the water: water up to the knees; he measured (another) one thousand cubits and made me walk through it; water up to the hips.

**5.** And as he measured (another) thousand, it was a river through which I could not walk, for the waters had risen; water only to swim in, a river through which one could not walk.

**6.** Then he said to me: Have you seen this, son of mankind? And he escorted me back to the bank of the river.

**7.** And when I returned, behold, there was an abundance of trees on both sides of the river bank.

וַיִּמְדֵּר אֶלָּפֶת בְּאַמְתָּה וַיַּעֲבֹר נִיְמָה בְּמִים  
מִי אַפְסִים:

**4.** וַיִּמְדֵּר אֶלָּפֶת וַיַּעֲבֹר נִיְמָה בְּמִים קְיָם  
בְּרִכִּים וַיִּמְדֵּר אֶלָּפֶת וַיַּעֲבֹר נִיְמָה מִ  
מַתְנִים:

**5.** וַיִּמְדֵּר אֶלָּפֶת נִחְלָה אֲשֶׁר לְאָוֹלָה  
לְעַבְרָה כִּי-גַּאֲוָה הַמִּים מִן שָׁחוֹת נִחְלָה  
אֲשֶׁר לְאַיְצָבָר:

**6.** וַיֹּאמֶר אֶלְي֙ הַרְאֵת בְּזִירָעָם  
וַיַּלְכְּבָנִי וַיִּשְׁבְּנִי שְׁפַת הַגְּנָחָל:

**7.** בְּשֻׁבְנִי וְהַגָּה אֶל-שְׁפַת הַגְּנָחָל  
עַז בְּבָבְקָאָר מִזָּה וּמִזָּה:

שָׁחָה, derived from שָׁחַה, "to swim," "to do on the waters that which would be done, the shewah, complete prostration, on the surface of the earth" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 6,7), אַפְסִים, "the ankles," סְמָךְ (סְמָךְ with נ added as a prefix) related to סְמָךְ, "to stop," "to end."

**Verse 6.** הַרְאֵת: "Have you seen this?" This is the requirement that must be met if these waters are to accomplish their wondrous work: The spirit of God must not be confined to the chambers of the Sanctuary; rather, the greater its physical distance from the premises of the Sanctuary, the more powerful must its impact become. Men must surrender completely to the spirit of God so that, having experienced its healing power in their own lives, they can behold its wondrous strength in nature as well.

**Verse 7.** This miracle came to pass at the time when the Prophet had "surrendered" to the waters of the river of God.

שְׁעֵן יַקְבֵּךְ אֶל אָרֶץ רַנְן וּוִירוֹשָׁלָם: It is not Jacob that flourishes because of this land but the land that flourishes because of Jacob. "Jacob is the source of the fountain through which the land will become rich in grain and new wine" (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 33,28).

8. He said to me: These waters flow toward the eastern region; they shall flow through the desolation and come to the sea, there emerging (waters) into the sea, and the waters shall be healed.

9. And it will come to pass that wherever the twin river flows, every living thing that moves will live and the fish will be exceedingly abundant; for these waters have come there so that those (waters) may be healed and they (the fish) would live—every [living] thing, wherever the river flows.

10. And it will come to pass that fishermen will stand by it, from En-Gedi to En-Eglaim; they shall be places for the spreading of nets; as to their species, its fish will be exceedingly abundant as the fish of the great sea.

8. וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלֵי הָפָים הָאֱלֹהִים  
וַיָּצְאִים אֶל-הַגְּלֹילָה הַקְּרֻמּוֹנָה  
וַיָּרֹדוּ עַל-הָעֲרָבָה וּבָאוּ הַיּוֹם  
אֶל-הַיּוֹם הַמּוֹצָאִים וַיְנַרְפְּאָוּ  
הַפְּנִים:

9. וְהַנָּה כָּל-נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה | אֲשֶׁר-  
יִשְׁרַעַץ אֶל כָּל-אָשָׁר יִבּוֹא שָׁם  
גַּחֲלִים יְחִיָּה וְהַנָּה תְּרֻגֵּה רְבָה  
מְאֹר בָּיִר בָּאָוְשָׁמָה הַפְּנִים הָאֱלֹהִים  
וַיְרַפְּאָוּ וְחִי כָּל אֲשֶׁר-יִבּוֹא שָׁמָה  
הַנָּחֶל:

10. וְהַנָּה יַעֲמֹדוּ עַלְיוֹ רְגִינִים מַעֲיוֹן  
בְּרוֹן וְעַדְעַן עֲנָלִים מַשְׁטוֹת  
לְחַרְקִים יְהִי לְמִינָה תְּהִינָה רְגִנְתָּם  
כְּרֻבִּתָּם הַנָּסָרְנוֹל רְבָה מְאֹר:

פסוד קרי.

**Verse 8.** The waters continue to flow and wherever they pass, the desolation vanishes and “dead” or stagnant waters come alive again. **בָּאָוּ:** The waters flow, and they never for a moment cease to be the waters of God (מָאוֹתִים). guided by Him and gushing forth from His Sanctuary.

**מִצְאָתִים**, as in Chapter 14, Verse 22. **שְׁרָבָה**: the Jordan valley; **יִתְהַ**: into the Dead Sea.

**Verses 9–10.** **נַחֲלִים**: The river is a “double river” because it performs a twofold function. It restores the health of Israel and mankind and, by so doing, it also brings about the rebirth of nature. The Dead Sea will abound with fish once more, for the fish have found their natural habitat again. **כְּל-אָשָׁר**: It is the same element to which Israel, likewise, owes its survival (cf. Genesis 48,16: **רָדוֹן לֹבֶן וָרָן**). Not without good reason does Verse 10 stress **לְמִתְנַ**: Israel, too, now knows for all time that it will prosper only as long as it submits to the Divinely-ordained law of **לְמִתְנַ**.

**עַמְדוּ פְּלִי**: on the shores of what was once the “Dead” Sea.

**11.** Its swamps and marshes not having been restored to health—will be given to salt.

**12.** But at the river itself there will grow, on each side, every kind of fruit tree for food, its leaves will not wither; its fruits will not cease; it will cause them to ripen according to their months, for its

וְבָצָתוֹ גַּנְבָּאוֹ וְלֹא יִרְפָּא  
לְמֵלֶחֶת נְתָנָה

12. עַל־הַנָּחֶל יַעֲלֵה עַל־שְׁפָתָה  
מִזֶּה | וּמִזֶּה | בְּלִעְצָמָאָכָל  
לְאִיּוֹבָל עַלְלוֹ וְלֹא־יַרְתָּם פָּרוֹז  
לְתַרְשֵׁיו יִכְבֶּר כִּי מִפְּקוּדוֹ מָזָן  
הַמְּקֻרֶשׁ הַפָּה יוֹצְאִים וְהַיִּזְרֵר  
בְּצָאתֵי קָרֵד וְהַיָּה קָרֵי

**Verse 11.** The remote parts of the sea will be allowed to keep their heavy salt content. This will be the source from which men will obtain salt.

**Verse 12:** *לְחַדְשֵׁיו*: Every tree will produce its fruit in its due season. *עַלְלוֹ*: note the close semantic relationship between *עלָה*, "leaf" and *עלָה*, "healing" (see Hirsch Commentary, Genesis 22,2).

These verses are an inspired combination of allegory and realistic description. Men and nature flourish and ripen on the banks of this river; they neither wither nor die. Israel is "like the tree planted by the waters, that spreads its roots by the veins of water. It never sees drought come, and its leaf is always green; it need not be anxious even in the year of famine and it will never cease to bear fruit" (Jeremiah 17,8; cf. Psalm 1). Israel's dwellings are like "gardens at the river, like aloe trees that God has planted, like cedars beside the waters. The water flows from *His* buckets and it is *His* seed that is at the abundant flow" (Numbers 24,6-7).

Israel had found its way back to God; its path led it "along brooks of water;" that is why "its soul is like a richly-watered garden, and they shall have no more sorrow" (Jeremiah 31,8-11).

Perhaps this vision of blessing and prosperity will explain why the description of the consecration of the new Sanctuary contains no reference whatsoever to the libations of wine usually expected on such occasions.

The wine of *נסיכים* was poured down from the southwest corner of the altar, symbolizing the homage due to God as the Giver of our rejoicing. On the festival of Sukkoth *טַעַם הַמִּים* was added. Amidst immense rejoicing, water was brought into the Sanctuary (*שְׂطָחוֹ בֵּית הַשְׁעָכָה*) and poured down from the altar together with the libation of wine. This is our symbolic acknowledgment that not only "every drop of our wine," every joyous emotion in our lives, but also "every drop of our water," every gift of heaven on which our life and prosperity depend, comes from God (Hirsch Commentary, Numbers 29,19).

But the consecration of Israel's future Sanctuary that will endure forever will betoken a gift from heaven greater than all these. On that occasion, Israel

waters will stream from the Sanctuary and its fruit will serve as food and its leaves for healing.

13. Thus has my Lord spoken, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice; This is the region in which you shall take possession of

**פְּרִי לִמְכָל וְעַלְהוּ לְתֹרוֹפָה:**

בָּה אָמַר אֱלֹהִים יְהוָה נָהָג בְּגַבּוֹל  
אֲשֶׁר תִּתְגַּלְלֵוּ אֶת-הָאָרֶץ לְשָׁנִי

will receive a "gift of water" which will bring about not only the rebirth and transformation of Israel's land into a paradise but, in addition, Israel's own rebirth to the heights of bliss and rejoicing. The promise of the Prophets has then become glorious reality. "He has made her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the garden of God. Joy and gladness will be found in her, giving of thanks and the voice of song" (Isaiah 51:3). If such waters flow past Israel upon the south side of God's altar from deep within the Sanctuary, is there any need for Israel to offer its wine and its water to God as the Giver of its rejoicing and its happiness, at the very moment where it receives its healing directly from "the river of Divine delights" as it blissfully looks up to God?

The relationship between the "water celebration" that takes place each year, on the one hand, and God's own "gift of water," on the other, is clear from מס' מדוח פ' ב' ס' 52, where there is a reference to the "Water Gate" which derived its name from the water that was brought through this gate into the Sanctuary. בנו הרים מפלים וצחין ליהוָה יְהוָה ר' אליעזר בן יعقوב comments: ספ"ח "The waters that trickled through this gate [during the days of the Second Temple] will one day gush forth from beneath the threshold of the בָּאָרוֹרִי הַגְּרָא" (see ח"נ).

Verse 13. This land, watered by the river of God, is now to be distributed among the tribes of Israel in accordance with dimensions to be established by God. In view of all the foregoing, it might not be too bold to interpret גה גבּול as referring to the שְׂקָרָה (Verse 12), conveying the thought that Israel receives its land from within the territory circumscribed by the Sanctuary, since in fact the area of the Sanctuary extends, far beyond the narrow limits of Zion, over all of Eretz Yisrael (see all נֶגֶל סְבִיבָה קֹדֶשׁ קֹדֶשׁ, Chapter 43, Verse 13 and Chapter 45, Verse 1). In other words, the boundaries of the Sanctuary would be identical with the boundaries of the Land of Israel. For the same thought, see Chapter 34, Verses 13-14. In this way one could understand the otherwise unusual form of גה גבּול instead of גה גבּול גה גבּול, according to the formula of אֵשׁ בְּחֵדֶשׁ, can replace each other. Together the numerical value of the two letters add up to a greater unit (10). Hence the boundaries of the Sanctuary (גה גבּול) could

the land for the Twelve Tribes of Israel. Joseph shall (receive) two portions.

**14.** You shall take possession of it in equal parts which I have lifted up My hand (in a vow) to give to your forefathers; this land shall devolve upon you as an inheritance.

עַשְׂרֵה שָׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל יוֹסֵף חֶבְלִים:

14. וְנַחֲלָתֶם אֹתֶה אִישׁ כָּאָחִיו  
אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁאַתִּי אֶת־יְדֵי לְתַתָּה  
לְאַבְתִּיכֶם וּנְפַלֵּה הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
לְכֶם בְּנָחֶלה:

be identical with those of the land (זה גבול) as together ( $1 + 1 = 10$ ) they form a single entity suffused with holiness.

**לשוני עשר וכיו'**: When Israel will take possession of its land, never to be parted from it again, none of Israel's tribes will be absent. As the Prophets have said over and over again, the Ten Lost tribes, too, will then reappear and be ingathered (see Chapter 37).

**יוסף חבלים**: Though the tribe of Levi is not included in this future distribution of the land, the total number of tribes involved will still be twelve because Joseph is counted as a double tribe (see Chapter 48, Verses 4-5). "The measuring cord and all its other measured portions" (Hirsch Commentary, Deuteronomy 32,9).

**Verse 14. איש כאחיו**: Unlike the earlier divisions of the land, the future distribution of אָרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל will provide an equal share for each tribe. This applies, above all, to the width of the strips of land (see Chapter 48). The division of the land into strips of equal size seems to apply only to Eretz Yisrael proper, to the west of the river Jordan (see Rashi, Verse 18). Though two and a half tribes dwelled on land east of the Jordan, the Torah (Numbers 34,12) regards the Jordan as the eastern boundary of the Land of Israel. But this does not exclude the possibility that, if a tribe was in need of additional land, some of Israel's tribal territories could in time be expanded far beyond the east bank of the Jordan (see Verse 18 ff.). For the present verse would seem to indicate that Israel will receive not only the territory originally promised to it but also all the territory which the Torah (see Deuteronomy 19,8) envisioned as falling to Israel at a future time to be determined by God: גַּמְלָה הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת לְכֶם (see Malbim).

What holds good for the boundaries of the Holy Land as defined in the Torah must certainly apply also to the boundaries as defined in the Book of Ezekiel. As R. Hirsch puts it (Commentary, Numbers 34,4): "We cannot attempt to provide an accurate translation of these delineations for the boundaries of the Holy Land. The place names mentioned in the text cannot be identified

15. And this shall be the border of the land: toward the north side from the great sea, the way to Cheslon, to reach Tzedad.

16. Chamath, Berotha and Sivrayim, which lie between the territory of Damesek and the region of Chamath, toward Chotzer ha-Tichon which is near the region of Chavran.

17. Thus, the border shall run from the sea to Chatzar Enon, the territory of Damesek and the entire north, northward, and the territory of Chamath and the north side (which lies beyond).

18. And the eastern border shall be the Yarden, which flows (from the north) between Chavran, Damesek, Gilead and Eretz Yisrael; you shall measure from the (northern) border to the eastern sea and the eastern side (which lies beyond).

19. And the southern border to

וְזֹה גָּבֹל הָאָרֶץ לִפְנַת צְפֹנָה  
סְוִירָהִים נְגַנּוֹל הַדָּרֶךְ חַתֵּלְןִי לְבוֹא  
אֲרֻרָה:

16. חַמָּת | בְּרוֹתָה סְכָרִים אֲשֶׁר  
בַּיוֹדְגָּבָול דְּפָשָׂק וְכַיִן גָּבֹל חַמָּת  
חַצֵּר הַתִּיכּוֹן אֲשֶׁר אֶל-גָּבָול חַוּרָה:

17. וְתַהֲרֵה גָּבֹל מִזְרָחָם חַצֵּר עַיִנוֹן  
גָּבֹל דְּפָשָׂק וְצָפֹן | צְפֹנָה גָּבֹל  
חַמָּת וְעַת פָּאַת צְפֹן:

18. וְפָאַת קָדִים מִפְּנֵי חַוּרָה וּמִפְּנֵי  
דְּפָשָׂק וּמִבֵּין הַגָּלְעָד וּמִבֵּין אֶרְזִים  
יְשָׁרָאֵל הַיְרָדוֹן מִגְּבֹול עַל-הַיָּם  
הַקְּרָמוֹנִי תְּמָרוֹן וְעַת פָּאַת קְרִיקָה:

19. וְפָאַת גָּבָב תִּימָנָה מִתְּמָרֵד עַד-

with geographical accuracy. Therefore, any attempt to identify these localities today could only be based on conjecture with very little factual support."

*Verse 15.* מִן הַם הַגָּדוֹל: from the Mediterranean Sea toward the east.

*Verse 16.* Chamath is to be a part of אַי (Zechariah 9,2).

*Verse 17.* The northern border specified in the Torah runs from the Mediterranean in the west to Chatzar Enon in the east (Numbers 34,9); it then widens with the inclusion of Damesek and Chamath (Zechariah 9,1–2) to the north.

*Verse 18.* As in the Torah, the River Jordan, which flows between the two above-mentioned territories to the Dead Sea, forms the eastern boundary of the Land of Israel. מִתְּמָרֵד: to this, add the territorial expansion beyond this eastern boundary (see Verse 14).

*Verse 19.* הַלָּה: until the brook Mitzrayim, which flows into the Mediterranean Sea (Numbers 34,5).

the right; from Tamar to the waters of Merivot Kadesh, on to the brook which flows to the great sea and the southern side to the right (which lies beyond).

**20.** And the western border: the great sea from the (southern) border to the place from where one comes to Chamath. This is the western border.

**21.** And you shall divide this land among yourselves, as tribes of Israel.

**22.** And it shall come to pass that when you allot it as an inheritance among yourselves and among the strangers who entered into your midst from abroad and who have begotten children in your midst: they shall be

מִןْ מִרְיבּוֹת קָרֵשׁ נֶתֶלָה אֶל־הַיָּם  
הַגָּדוֹל וְאֶת פָּאָתִת תִּמְנָה גַּנְבָּה:

20. וְפָאָתִידִים הִנֵּם הַגָּדוֹל מִגְּבוֹל  
עֲרִינְכָּחַ לְבּוֹא חֶמֶת זוֹאת פָּאָתִיד:

21. וְחַלְקַתְּמָן אֶת־הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת  
לְכֶם לְשָׁבֵטֶיכֶם וּשְׂרָאֵל:

22. וְזַהֲהַתְּפִלּוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ בְּגַדְלָה לְכֶם  
וּלְהַגְּרִים הַגְּרִים בְּתוּכֶיכֶם אֲשֶׁר־  
הַוּלְדוּ בְּנָוֹם בְּתוּכֶיכֶם וְהִיוּ לְכֶם

*Verse 20.* עד נכת: probably (see Rashi) until Mount Hor to the northwest, from where the road leads to Chamath (Numbers 34,8).

*Verse 21.* As שָׁבָטִים יִשְׂרָאֵל they occupied the land "as separate entities which, however, by virtue not only of their descent but also because of the mission common to them all, form one united whole" (Hirsch Commentary, Psalms 78,55).

*Verse 22.* The emphasis is on תִּפְלֹו. The previous verse dealt with the distribution of the land. For the sake of clarity and accuracy, the present verse explains: It is not you who divide the land among yourselves. The land is given to you; it does not come to you by your own choice or calculation (see Hirsch Commentary, Exodus 15,4). God is the owner of this land forever; He only entrusts the land to your care and management. Therefore it is, in fact, you who are given to the Land. The Land itself remains the Land of God forever. "For the Land is Mine, for you are only strangers and sojourners with Me" (Leviticus 25,23).

The Word of God, on which the future existence of the Jewish people in Eretz Yisrael depends, makes it clear that the strangers who embraced Judaism while Israel was in exile have the same right to the land as any original members of the people of Israel. God numbers them, too, among the שָׁבָטִים

to you as the native among Israel's sons—together with you shall they receive an allotment as an inheritance among the tribes of Israel.

**23.** And it shall come to pass that in the tribe which the stranger joined from abroad, there you shall give him his portion; thus says my Lord, God. Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**Chap. 48.** 1. And these are the names of the tribes from the northern end along the way to Cheslon to reach Chamath, toward

כִּאָזְרָח בְּכָנָן יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶתְכֶם יַפְלוּ  
בְּגַחַלָּה בְּתוֹךְ שָׁבֵט יִשְׂרָאֵל:

<sup>23</sup> וְהִיָּה בְּשֵׁבֶט אֲשֶׁר־גַּרְתָּ  
אַתָּה שָׁם תַּחַנֵּן גַּחַלָּתָנוּ נָאָם אֱלֹהִים  
יְהוָה:

מִחְ . וְאֵלָה שְׁמוֹת הַשְׁבָּטִים  
מִקְצָה צְפֹנָה אֶל־יָם הַנָּרִיחַתְלִי  
לְכֹוא־חַמָּת חַצְרָה עִינָן גְּבוּל

ישראל who fell as an inheritance to Him, as it were, at a time when most of the world had forsaken Him (Deuteronomy 32,9).

*Verse 23.* אשר גַּר: in whose midst he had embraced Judaism while Israel was in exile (Rashi).

**Chapter 48, Verse 1.** שְׁמוֹת הַשְׁבָּטִים refers to Verse 21 of the previous chapter: these are the names of the tribes among whom the land was to be divided. The northern boundary and later (Verse 21) the southern boundary must be specified here again because, unlike the tribal territories spanning the entire width of the land from east to west, these did not run along straight lines.

The strip of land allotted to the tribe of Dan was bounded at the north by the northern border of the land. The "eastern and western sides" of the land ran on either side. The strip also extended to the south in a width of 25,000 measuring sticks, equal to the dimensions of the other tribal territories and of the "uplifted donation from the land to the Sanctuary" (Verse 8); see Rashi and Chapter 45, Verse 7.

The word **לִקְיָם**, in connection with **לִקְיָם** in Verse 8, is repeated in the case of each of the twelve tribes. This indicates that all the strips of tribal territory had the same width. It is clear that the Prophet did not omit the word **לִקְיָם** without good reason. Therefore the Sages, if we understand them correctly, interpret the use of the word **לִקְיָם** with the name of each tribe, as an attributive, indicating that each and every one of these tribes received their land only and

Chatzar Enon, the region of Damesek, along Charnath; he shall have the eastern and the western side: Dan, one (portion).

2. Adjoining the territory of Dan, from the eastern to the western side: Asher, one (portion).

3. Adjoining the territory of Asher, from the eastern to the western side: Naphtali, one (portion).

4. Adjoining the territory of Naphtali, from the eastern to the western side: Menashe, one (portion).

5. Adjoining the territory of Menashe, from the eastern to the western side: Ephraim, one (portion).

6. Adjoining the territory of Ephraim, from the eastern to the western side: Reuben, one (portion).

7. Adjoining the territory of Reuben, from the eastern to the western side: Judah, one (portion).

8. Adjoining the territory of Ju-

רֶפֶשׂ צְפֻנָה אֶלְיָעֵן חֲמַת  
וְהַוּדָה פָאַתִּיקָרִים הַיִם כָּן  
אַחֲרָה:

2. וְעַל גְּבוּל דָן מִפְאַת קְרִים עַד  
פָאַתִּיקָה אֲשֶׁר אַחֲרָה:

3. וְעַל גְּבוּל אַשֶּׁר מִפְאַת קְרִים  
עַד־פָאַתִּיקָה נִפְתַּלְיָ אַחֲרָה:

4. וְעַל גְּבוּל נִפְתַּלְיָ מִפְאַת קְרִמָה  
עַד־פָאַתִּיקָה מִנְשָׁה אַחֲרָה:

5. וְעַל גְּבוּל מִנְשָׁה מִפְאַת קְרִמָה  
עַד־פָאַתִּיקָה אַפְרִים אַחֲרָה:

6. וְעַל גְּבוּל אַפְרִים מִפְאַת קְרִים  
עַד־פָאַתִּיקָה רָאוּבֵן אַחֲרָה:

7. וְעַל גְּבוּל רָאוּבֵן מִפְאַת קְרִים  
עַד־פָאַתִּיקָה יְהוּנָה אַחֲרָה:

8. וְגַל גְּבוּל יְהוּנָה מִפְאַת קְרִים

solely from the hand of God. In time, all the nations of the earth will become one with Israel in pledging their allegiance to God. What a glorious fulfillment of *ה בָּרוּ יְהוָה וְאַין עַזָּה אֶל נַכְרָה* (Deuteronomy 32,12; *Sifri*, ibid.; also *Targum*).

For the order in which the tribal territories are listed, see our commentary on Verse 23 below.

*Verses 2 ff.* Note the alternating use of **מִפְאַת קְרִים** and **מִפְאַת קְרִיָה** in Verses 2–8. Perhaps the use of **מִפְאַת קְרִיָה** indicates that in these particular instances the eastern boundaries do not remain as given above (Chapter 47, Verse 18) but might extend further to the east, beyond the Jordan (see *ibid.*)

*Verse 8.* The strip of land characterized in Chapter 47, Verses 1 ff. as a "sacred uplifted donation from the land" along with the other uplifted

dah, from the eastern side to the western side shall be the uplifted donation that you shall raise in a width of twenty-five thousand and in a length as one of the parts (that extends) from the eastern to the western side: and the Sanctuary shall be in its midst.

**9.** The uplifted donation that you raise for God (from this) shall have a length of twenty-five thousand and a width of ten thousand.

**10.** And for these shall be the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary for the priests: toward the north twenty-five thousand; toward the west, the width of ten thousand; to the east, the width of ten thousand, to the south, the length of twenty-five thousand—and God's Sanctuary shall be in its midst.

**11.** It shall be for the priests, of

עֲרֵפָאַת־יְמָה תִּהְיֶה הַתְּרוּמָה  
אֲשֶׁר־תְּרִיכָו חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁנָרִים  
אֱלֹף רַחֲבָה וְאֶרְךָ בְּאַתְּרֵי הַחֲלֻקִים  
מִפְאַת קְרִיכָה עֲרֵפָאַת־יְמָה  
וְתִינְהַמְּקֻרְשׁ בְּתוֹכוֹ:

**9.** הַתְּרוּמָה אֲשֶׁר תְּרִיכָו לִיהְוָה  
אֱלֹף חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁנָרִים אֱלֹף וּרַחֲבָה  
עַשְׂרֵת אֱלֹפִים:

**10.** וְלֹאֵלֶּה תִּהְיֶה תְּרוּמַת־הַקְרֵשׁ  
לְכָהָנוֹם אֲפָגָה חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁנָרִים  
אֱלֹף וּנְפָה רַחֲבָה עַשְׂרֵת אֱלֹפִים  
וּקְרִיכָה רַחֲבָה עַשְׂרֵת אֱלֹפִים  
וְנִגְבָּה אֱלֹף חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁנָרִים אֱלֹף  
וְתִינְהַמְּקֻרְשׁ יְהֹוָה בְּתוֹכוֹ:

**11.** לְכָהָנוֹם הַמְּקֻרְשׁ מִבְנֵי צָרוֹק

donations is now discussed in the context of the tribal territories adjoining it to the north and to the south. These two passages complement one another also in other respects.

*Verse 9.* The whole of this strip of land bears the character of because, as we are also told in Verse 8, the new Sanctuary is to be built within its borders. Nevertheless, a portion is to be set aside even from this sacred territory as a more specific *חַרְושׁ* to God.

*Verse 10.* Because it is the “sacred uplifted donation” set aside for God (Verse 9) and the site of God’s Sanctuary [a], this entire territory is to be assigned to the priests [A B E F].

Every word in this verse is of profound significance. The possession of such hallowed ground imposes a most solemn responsibility upon the priests; it is their task to transform this territory into a *מִקְדָּשׁ לְמִקְרֵשׁ* (Chapter 45, Verse 4; see our commentary, *ibid.*).

*Verse 11.* *הַמִּקְדָּשׁ:* God can expect that each of these individuals will give

whom each and every one is sanctified, from the sons of Zadok who kept My charge and did not go astray when the sons of Israel went astray, as the Levites went astray.

**12.** Theirs shall be God's uplifted donation from the uplifted donation of the land, a most holy Sanctuary for the territory of the Levites.

**13.** And the Levites (shall possess), corresponding to the territory of the priests: a length of twenty-five thousand, a width of ten thousand, the entire length of twenty-five thousand and the width of ten thousand.

**14.** But they may not sell any of it, nor exchange it; one may not cause the "choicest" of the land to dwindle through transfer (to alien ownership), for it is a Sanctuary of God.

אֲשֶׁר שִׁמְרָו מְשֻׁמְרָתִי אֲשֶׁר לֹא  
תַּשׁו בְּתַחְוֹת בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל כִּאֲשֶׁר  
תַּשׁו הַלּוּיוּם:

יא. וְהוֹתֶה לָהֶם תְּרוּמָה מִתְּרוּמָה  
הָאָרֶץ קָרֵשׁ גְּרָשִׁים אֶל-גְּבֻרִיל  
הַלּוּיוּם:

יב. וְהַלּוּיוּם לְעֵפֶת גְּבוּל הַכֹּהֲנִים  
חַמְשָׁה עַשְׂרִים אֶלָף אָרֶךְ וּרְחֵב  
עַשְׂרִת אֶלָפִים כָּל-אָרֶךְ חַמְשָׁה  
עַשְׂרִים אֶלָף וּרְחֵב עַשְׂרִת  
אֶלָפִים:

יכ. וְלֹא יִמְכְּרוּ מִפְנֵו וְלֹא יִמְרְךָ  
יִצְבּוּר רְאֵשֵׁת הָאָרֶץ בַּיּוֹקָדָשׁ  
לִירּוֹה:

עכיד קרי.

their unreserved loyalty to His cause even as their forefathers did in the past (see Chapter 44, Verse 15). הַלּוּיוּם: see *ibid.*, Verse 10.

*Verse 12.* As noted earlier (Chapter 47, Verse 2), the Sanctuary is to be kept for the entire land. In the present verse, we are told that the entire territory assigned to the priests is to exercise the same hallowing influence primarily upon the Levite territory adjoining it to the south.

*Verse 13.* See Chapter 45, Verse 5 [E F G H]. כָל אָרֶךְ וּנְבָרֵךְ: Unlike the priests, who must set aside part of their territory for the Sanctuary (Chapter 45, Verse 2), the Levites are free to use the entire territory assigned to them as they see fit (see *מִצְדָּחָה וּדָבָר*).

*Verse 14.* But precisely for this reason the Levites are expressly admonished not to impair the sacred character of their territory by selling or bartering any portion of it. Like any other *חוֹרֶה* or *רְאֵשֵׁת* and it is to keep this character. The soil on which the Levites are to dwell shall be holy (see

15. And the five thousand that are left over from the width in the expanse of twenty-five thousand shall remain without being consecrated for the city, for the purpose of dwelling and for the outskirts; in its midst shall the city rise.

16. These are its measurements: the northern side, four thousand five hundred, the southern side, four thousand five hundred, the

15. וְחַמֵּשֶׁת אֲלָפִים הַגּוֹתֶר בְּרֶחֶב  
עַל־פָּנָיו חַמֵּשָׁה וְשׁוֹרִים אַלְפָיָה־  
הַזָּה לְעֵיר לְמוֹשֵׁב אַמְגָרְשׁוּה וְהַוְתָּה  
הַעִיר בְּתוֹכָה:

16. וְאַלְהָ מִרוּתִיהָ פָּאָת צְפָן  
חַמֵּשׁ מֵאוֹת וְאֶרְבָּעָת אֲלָפִים  
וּפְאַת־נָגֵב חַמֵּשׁ חַמֵּשׁ מֵאוֹת  
וְאֶרְבָּעָת אֲלָפִים וּמִפְאָת קְרוּם  
בְּתוֹכוֹ קָרֵי. הַסְּשָׁכְטִיב לְאַקְרֵי.

Chapter 45, Verse 5). In our rendering of this passage we have attempted to convey the significance of the קרי and נחיב of קרי and נחיב of קרי.

*Verse 15.* The width of the strip was 25,000 cubits (Verse 8). Thus, after 10,000 cubits each had been set aside for the territories of the priests and the Levites, 5,000 cubits remained for the urban district [G H C D]. This district is not hallowed in the sense that the restrictions listed in Verse 14 would be applicable to it.

*Verse 16.* The unusual spelling **חַרְופָה**, referring to the city itself (i.e., **חַרְופָה**) serves to remind us that even though the city itself is **חַל**, it stands on ground that has the character of **חַרְופָה** (see Verse 18).

*Verse 16.* The area of the city spread over a total expanse of 4,500 cubits in each direction. This area was surrounded by outskirts extending in each direction 250 cubits (see Verse 17). Thus, the width of the strip set aside for the urban district (i.e., 5,000 cubits) was fully accounted for [b].

In the specifications for the south side there is a double שָׁמֶן that is read only as a single שָׁמֵן (קְרֵי). We might explain this as follows. The concluding verse (Verse 35) of this final chapter states that this city will be a holy city of God. Note, however, that the Sanctuary of God extends over a total area of שָׁמֶן מֵאוֹת שָׁמֶן (Chapter 45, Verse 2). The words שָׁמֶן מֵאוֹת in this verse might indicate that the Sanctuary of God will be present everywhere in this city, even in the south, the point which, physically, is the furthest away from the Sanctuary. Indeed, at the very outset (Chapter 40, Verse 2), the Prophet beheld the city lying upon "the high mountain, in the south" (see our commentary, *ibid.*). There is a clear relationship between the total domain of the city (i.e., 5,000 cubits) and the area assigned to the Sanctuary (i.e., 500 cubits). Thus, the Sanctuary represents a tenth, a **מֵשֶׁר** of the city.

eastern side, four thousand five hundred and the western side, four thousand five hundred.

חמש מאות וארבעת אלפים  
ופאת־קמה חמש מאות  
וארבעת אלפים:

**17.** The outskirts added to the city: to the north, two hundred and fifty; to the south, two hundred and fifty; to the east, two hundred and fifty; and to the west, two hundred and fifty.

ו. והיה מנורש לעיר צפונה  
חמשים ומאהים ונגבה חמישים  
ומאהים וקரימה חמישים  
ומאהים וגינה חמישים ומאהים:

**18.** That which is left over from the length, corresponding to the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary—ten thousand to the east and ten thousand to the west—shall correspond to the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary; its produce shall be food for the servants of the city.

ו. והנותר באורך לאחת תרומות  
הקדש עשרת אלפים ימה והיה לאחת  
תרומות הقدس והיתה תבואה  
לחם לעבר העיר:

**19.** And as for the servant of the city—it [the Sanctuary] shall they serve from among all the tribes of Israel.

ו. וה עבר העיר יעבדו מכל  
שבטי ישראל:  
תבואתו קרי.

סאת קרים (ומפה קרים) (as distinct from the use of **סאת קרים** in the measurements of the other sides): This textual peculiarity may imply that even though the eastern boundary would offer the best possibility for expansion (see Chapter 47, Verse 14), the city should not be allowed to exceed its limits even on that side. Hence we also read in Verse 32: **ואל סאת קרים** (see our commentary, *ibid.*).

**Verse 18–19.** The vacant tracts of land remaining on either side of the city will be set aside for agricultural use. But consider the spirit in which this is to be done. We were just told **והיה לאחת תרומות הقدس** (note the masculine form) that these vacant lands extend over a length corresponding to the **قدس** (note the masculine form). This comparison with the **قدس**, which is repeated again and again, is significant (see Chapter 45, Verse 6). But now, immediately afterwards, we are told **והיתה תבואה** (note the feminine form) that this ground itself is **תבואה** and the **עבדי העיר** are to live from its sacred produce ( **התבואה**). Who are the **עבדי העיר**? We find the answer in Verse 19. The term **עובדו** refers to all the tribes of Israel. It is to *it*, the **מקדש**, the Sanctuary, to which all the tribes of Israel, converging upon the City of God (**העיר**) from near and far as **שבטי יהה**, the tribes of God, consecrate themselves. The service performed by

20. The entire uplifted donation twenty-five thousand by twenty-five thousand: squared, you shall raise the uplifted donation of the Sanctuary for the possession of the city.

21. But the rest shall belong to the prince at both sides of the Sanctuary's uplifted donation and of the city property, along the uplifted donation of twenty-five thousand to the eastern border, and in the west, along the twenty-five thousand to the western border: thus that which corresponds to (the other) parts shall be [set aside] for the prince. The uplifted donation of the Sanctuary and the Sanctuary of the House shall be in its midst.

22. Parts of the property of the

תְשׁוּרִים אֶלָף בְּחַמְשָׁה וּשְׁעִירִים  
אֶלָף רְבִיעִית תְּרִימָו אֶת-תְּרוּקָת  
הַקְרֵש אֶל-אֲחֹזַת הָעִיר:

21. וְהַנּוּתָר לְשֻׁוְיא מִזָּה | וּמִזָּה |  
לְתְרוּמָת-הַקְרֵש וּלְאֲחֹזַת הָעִיר |  
אֶל-פָנֵי חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁעִירִים אֶלָף |  
תְרוּמָה עַד-גָבֵול קְרִישָׁה וּזְמָה  
עַל-פָנֵי חַמְשָׁה וּשְׁעִירִים אֶלָף עַל-  
גָבֵול וּמָה לְעַמְתָ חָלֻקִים לְשֻׁוְיא  
וּוּתָרָה תְרוּקָת הַקְרֵש וּמִקְרֵש  
הַבַּיּוֹת בְּתֹוכָה:

22. וּמְאַחֹזַת הַלּוּם וּמְאַחֹזַת  
בְּתוּכוֹ קָרֵי.

them is קדש! Cf. the repeated exhortation in the Book of Psalms: שָׁלוּ צִין גּוֹר סְפִרְיוֹ מִנּוֹלִיהָ, שִׁיחַו לְבָכָם לְחִילָה וּנוּר (48,13). שְׁלָומָיו יְרָשָׁלָם (122,6).

*Verse 20.* And at the end we are told that all of this has been set aside for the property of the city. This means that just as the hallowing impact of the Sanctuary extends to all the sections and inhabitants of the city (Chapter 45, Verse 1), so even the non-consecrated areas of this "City of God" unite to become one great and mighty Sanctuary of the Lord.

*Verse 21.* The significance of the ownership by the נושא of a part of the land is explained in Chapter 45, Verse 7–10. Note the characteristic conclusion of our verse here: וְהִיחָה חִרּוּמָת הַקְרֵש וּמִקְדָשׁ הַבַּיּוֹת בְּתוּכָה. This sentence reiterates the lofty ideals to which the prince must devote all his energies. מִקְדָשׁ הַנְּנִית: He must see to it that this "House" becomes a מִקְדָשׁ and remains so. The spelling suggests that, in reality, the landed property of the prince itself should become an uplifted donation for the Sanctuary in which the priests also will have a share, וּמִקְדָשׁ הַבַּיּוֹת and in whose midst the Sanctuary will rise.

*Verse 22.* This verse contains what appear to be two additional geographical redundancies. In fact, however, these apparent redundancies point

Levites and the property of the city shall lie in the midst of the prince's (domain); the area between the territories of Judah and Benjamin shall belong to the prince.

23. And now (follow) the remaining tribes; from the eastern side to the western side: Benjamin, one (portion).

העיר בתוכך אשר לנשוא יהוה  
בין גבול יהורה ובין גבול בנימן  
לנשוא יהוה:

23. ויתר השבטים מפאת קרימה  
עריפאת יפה בנימן אחר:

to significant realities regarding the role of the ruler in the future kingdom of Israel. We have already analyzed, in the previous verse, the relationship between the lands owned by the king and those assigned to the priests. We are not told in the present verse that the Levite region and the urban district are located *in the midst* of the lands owned by the king, but *מהות הרים ומאותה העיר*, that they are *part of* the portion of the Levites and part of the urban district. Both areas overlap into the royal lands. This means that whatever will belong to the future king of Israel will benefit all the others, too (cf. Chapter 45, Verse 8).

Note, furthermore: בין גבול יהורה ובין גבול בנימן: The lands assigned to the king are located between the territories of Judah and Benjamin. Judah was originally the mightiest of all the tribes; Benjamin, the weakest. But now, under the king's benevolent rule, these two tribes will be equal to their brother tribes in the grandeur and dignity with which they will take possession of the sacred soil that is their portion.

*Verses 23 ff.* Here follows a list of the tracts of land allotted to the tribes not previously mentioned. Regarding the order in which they are listed, from the north to the south, we would propose the following explanation:

The tribes of Judah and Benjamin receive their portion of the Holy Land alongside the Sanctuary of God and its *חרוטה הקדש*. This is only natural, since Judah and Benjamin were the only two tribes that remained loyal to the Sanctuary of Zion at a time when the other ten tribes had broken away, at least politically, from that Sanctuary. It should be remembered, too, that the First Temple was also located in the territory of Judah and Benjamin, straddling the border between the lands of these two tribes. Such political divisions, of course, will no longer be a factor in the case of the Third Temple which will endure forever. All the tribes will have an equal share in that future Sanctuary and will rally around it with equal worthiness.

The territories of the remaining tribes will surround this Sanctuary from the north to the south in the same order as that in which the tribes encamped during their wanderings through the wilderness; i.e., starting with the tribal encampment located farthest to the north (see Numbers 2). There will be only

24. Adjoining the territory of Benjamin, from the eastern side to the western side: Shimon, one portion).

25. Adjoining the territory of Shimon, from the eastern side to the western side: Issachar, one portion).

26. Adjoining the territory of Issachar from the eastern side to the western side: Zevulun, one portion).

24. תַּעַל | גָּבוֹל בְּנִימָן מִפְאַת  
קְרֵיכָה עֲדִ-פָּאַת-יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמֻעָן  
אֶחָדר:

25. תַּעַל | גָּבוֹל שְׁמֻעָן מִפְאַת  
קְרֵיכָה עֲדִ-פָּאַת-יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיְשַׁכֵּר  
אֶחָדר:

26. תַּעַל | גָּבוֹל וַיְשַׁכֵּר מִפְאַת  
קְרֵיכָה עֲדִ-פָּאַת-יִשְׂרָאֵל זְבוּלָן אֶחָדר:

ne change: the tribes of Reuben and Gad, who settle on their own initiative in an area beyond the borders of the sacred soil, will be the last to receive their portion in the land. Reuben's land will be in the north; Gad's, in the south. In this manner it will be possible to acknowledge the first-born privilege of the tribe of Reuben by assigning its portion next to the territory of Judah.

In support of our suggested explanation, we will show graphically the similarities between the order in which the Israelite tribes encamped around the Sanctuary in the wilderness and the future distribution of the land among the tribes as described above:

The tribes as they encamped during their wandering (beginning with the northernmost camp)

וְרֵאשִׁית
בָּנְיָם
שְׁבָטֵן
צָהָב
מְנַשֶּׁה
אַשְׁר
נְתָרֵל
אַפְרִים
צָהָב
בָּנְיָם
וְרֵאשִׁית

Apportionment of the tribes in the Land (beginning in the north)

וְרֵאשִׁית
בָּנְיָם
שְׁבָטֵן
צָהָב
מְנַשֶּׁה
וְרֵאשִׁית
בָּנְיָם
שְׁבָטֵן
צָהָב
וְרֵאשִׁית

After thousands of years of wandering through the "wilderness of the nations" (Chapter 20, Verse 35), Israel, the nation forged in the wilderness but now cleansed and united forever, takes possession of its holy land again.

\*The reversal in the order of Ephraim and Menashe is explained in that the land of Ephraim, the leading tribe of the two, will be directly adjacent to the territories of

**27.** Adjoining the territory of Zevulun, from the eastern side to the western side: Gad, one (portion).

**28.** And by the border of Gad (further) until the southern border to the right; the border shall run from Tamar to the waters of Merivath Kadesh, to the stream that flows into the great sea.

**29.** This is the land that you shall allocate to the tribes of Israel from (God's) property and these are their portions, is the pronouncement of my Lord, God, Who reveals His loving kindness in justice.

**30.** And these shall be the exits of the city, from the northern

**27.** רֹאשׁ גָּבֵל וְכֹלֶן מִפְּאַת קָרְמָה  
עֲרֵפָת יִמְמָה גַּד אֶחָד:

**28.** רֹאשׁ גָּבֵל נֶגֶד אֶל-פָּאַת גָּנְבָּה  
תִּמְגָּנָה וְהַיָּה גָּבֵל מִתְּפָרֵט  
מִרְיבָּת קָרְשָׁן נְחַלָּה עַל-הַיָּם  
הַבָּרוֹל:

**29.** זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר-תְּפִילֵךְ  
מִנְחָלָה לְשִׁבְטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאֶלְהָה  
מְחַלְקֹותָם נָאָם אַרְנוּ וְהִוָּה: ס

**30.** וְאֵלָה תּוֹצִיאַת הָעָרָה מִפְּאַת

*Verse 28.* The strips of land mentioned thus far are marked off by lines running parallel to one another. In the case of the territory of Gad, the southernmost tribe (as with the territory of Dan, the northernmost tribe; see Verse 1), however, there is added a tract of land extending beyond the parallel line, down to the southern border; see Chapter 47, Verse 19.

*Verse 29.* See Chapter 47, Verses 21–22 and our commentary, *ibid.* This land falls to the tribes of Israel, *מנחלה*, from the inheritance of God. However, God remains its owner. "תָּבָאָתוּ וְהַטְּעָטוּ בָּהּ רַחֲלֹת" "You bring them home, You plant them in the mountain of Your inheritance . . ." (Exodus 15,17).

Viewing this glorious portrait of a united, reborn Israel, painted in such realistic colors by the Prophet, who could still doubt that there is indeed a great future in store for this people? For the almighty God of history, in His everlasting loving kindness, educates both Israel and the rest of mankind for the fulfillment of His purposes, and has set the seal of His truth upon His promise to His people.

*Verse 30.* The Prophet's final look is not directed toward the towering Sanctuary, but toward his vision of the city, the City of God. For neither the Sanctuary of God nor the State of God can become living realities until this city has been built and has placed its imprint upon the life and character of the nation now in exile.

side four thousand five hundred measuring (rods).

31. And the gates of the city in accordance with the names of Israel's tribes, three gates to the north: one, the gate of Reuben; one, the gate of Judah; one, the gate of Levi.

32. And at the eastern side four thousand five hundred and three

צְפּוֹן חֲמֵשׁ מֵאוֹת וָאֶרְבַּעַת  
אַלְפִים מִרְדָּה:

31. וּשְׁעָרֵי הַשִּׁיר עַל־שְׁמוֹת שְׁבָטִי  
יִשְׂרָאֵל שַׁעֲרִים שְׁלֹזֶה צְפּוֹנָה  
שַׁעַר רָאוּבֵן אַחֲרֵי שַׁעַר יְהוּדָה  
אַחֲרֵי שַׁעַר לְבִנֵּי אַחֲרֵי:

32. וּאַלְפִאת קְרִימָה חֲמֵשׁ  
מֵאוֹת וָאֶרְבַּעַת אַלְפִים וּשְׁעָרִים

The Prophet beholds the city from the outside, and he makes us aware of things we have not known before. He directs our eye to the gates that lead out from the city (מצאות as in Numbers 34,4). For just as the hallowing impact of the Sanctuary is symbolically linked with the gates that lead out from its sacred precincts (see Chapter 43, Verse 11 and Chapter 44, Verse 5), so, too, the sacred character of the city is dependent on the gates through which the visitor leaves.

We see gates wherever we look; each of these gates is named for one of the tribes of God. At the very place where Jeremiah had once begged his people—alas, in vain—to accept the sovereignty of God, we now behold the “feet” of the tribes, the “tribes of God that go up to the Testimony of Israel, to do homage to the Name of God” (Psalm 122). There the people now stand, and because they are now ready to subordinate their lives to the will of God, the gates that lead out from the city are transformed into מִזְבֵּחַ, “gates leading forth from the Sanctuary” (Chapter 44, Verse 5).

סְדָה is synonymous with קָמָה (Rashi); see Chapter 42, Verse 16 ff.

*Verse 31.* Here the priests and the Levites stand shoulder to shoulder with their brother tribes. (Note the frequent repetition of the word תְּבִיבָה; see our commentary on Verse 1 of this Chapter). For it is “at the gates of the city,” by the practical example of their own lives that the Levites must prove they are now truly fit to perform the functions of priesthood.

*Verse 32.* In noting the expanse of the city to the north and to the south, the Prophet names the measure (סְדָה) along with the figures. He therefore does not need to repeat the measure for the east and west sides. וְשַׁעַר יְהוּדָה: Curiously, only the Gate of Joseph is prefixed by the consonant י. The other gates are named without this prefix. The י, “also,” is meant to remind us that Joseph's tribes, Ephraim and Menashe, were the first to break loose from the City of God. Now they, too, as the tribe of Joseph, stand humbly, side by side with

gates, also the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one.

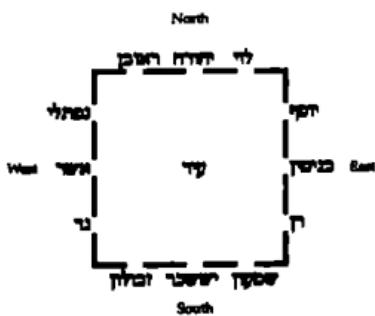
שָׁלַשָּׁה וְשַׁעַר יוֹסֵף אֶחָד שַׁעַר  
בְּנֵי־מֹן אֶחָד שַׁעַר דָּן אֶחָד:

the other tribes, at the gate of the city that belongs to them all. This thought is conveyed in our rendering of the text.

If we are not mistaken, the groupings at these gates (see diagram) are based on the relationship between the progenitors of the tribes in the original family of Jacob. The gates named for the sons of Leah are at the northern and southern sides of the city. The gate named for Simeon is placed directly opposite the gate of Levi in the spirit of Jacob's prophecy **אמיצם בישראל** (Genesis 49,7). In this fashion, also, the gates of the two leading tribes, Judah and Levi, will be located next to the gate of Reuben, Jacob's firstborn.

Thus, the arrangement of the gates is as follows: Reuben, Judah and Levi at the north (with Judah, as the leading tribe, in the center); Simeon, Yissachar and Zebulun at the south. Located at the east are the gates named for Rachel's sons Joseph and Benjamin. The remaining gate at the east is named for Dan; the gates at the west for Naftali, Asher and Gad. These last four are the sons of Jacob by Bilhah and Zilpah.

Diagram of Jerusalem's Gates



However, there may be a further reason for this arrangement of the gates. We read in the Psalms (87,2) that **אהוב ה' שער ציון מכל משכנות יעקב** "God loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwelling places of Jacob," that is, if the houses of the descendants of Jacob are not filled with the spirit to be obtained from Zion (Hirsch Commentary, ibid). But now that the dwelling places of

33. The southern side, four thousand five hundred measuring (rods) and three gates: the gate of Shimon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zevulun, one.

34. The western side, four thousand five hundred, their three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one.

35. Its perimeter: eighteen thousand; and the name of the city from that day shall be: 'ה' dwells there!

33. וּפְאַת־גָּנְבָה חֲמֵשׁ מִאוֹת  
וְאֶרְבְּעַת אֶלְפִים מִקְרָה וְשָׁעֲרִים  
שְׁלֹשָׁה שַׁעַר שְׁמֻן אַחֲרַ שַׁעַר  
וְשַׁכְּרָ אַחֲרַ שַׁעַר זְבוּלָן אַחֲרָ:

34. פְּאַת־יְמִין חֲמֵשׁ מִאוֹת  
וְאֶרְבְּעַת אֶלְפִים שַׁעֲרִים שְׁלֹשָׁה  
שַׁעַר נָדֵר אַחֲרַ שַׁעַר אַשְׁר אַחֲרָ  
שַׁעַר נִפְתָּלֵי אַחֲרָ:

35. סְבִיב שְׁמַנֵּה עָשָׂר אֶלְף וּשְׁמִינִי<sup>ו</sup>  
הָעִיר מִיקְרָה וְהָנָה | שְׁמָה:

Jacob have become, spiritually, the gates of Zion, they will all become worthy of God's love.

Verse 35. And the name of this city—which with its wide outskirts presents itself as a Sanctuary of God סביב קדש קדשים exerting its holy influence on all around (Chapter 43, Verse 12); as a "city of the mighty King" קריית מלך רב (Psalms 48,3); as the "city of God" ירושת ציון אלקיין (Psalms 46,5) to which the streams of God bring joy and prosperity; as the city קדש משכני ציון אלקיין (ibid.) which is the dwelling place of the Most High—is "God is in her midst." (ה' שָׁמָה for emphasis—cf. Chapter 23, Verse 3).

When the Prophet speaks of the City of God, he refers to it by all sorts of descriptions and circumlocutions. He never mentions the name of Jerusalem. For the city which he was given to behold is a vision of a city which his people must build while they are still in exile. If the Prophet's work of redemption is to become reality and Jerusalem is truly to rise upon sacred soil, the people of Israel must first build a throne for God in their own lives, no matter where they may dwell in exile.

Ezekiel's people can indeed build such a city. For, asked when, at long last, the city will rise in which God will dwell, his answer is טוֹם! But this simply means, "Even today, if you will but listen to His voice."

הַיּוֹם אָם בְּקוֹלוֹ חַסְפָּנוּ